

sovereign control over billions of dollars of oil sales and commodity purchases invited illicit premiums and kickback schemes now coming to light. But there is still much that is not known about the details for the Oil-for-Food transactions and that is why our committee and other committees of Congress are investigating.

This much we know, something went wrong. Saddam Hussein's regime reaped an estimated \$10.1 billion from this program, \$5.7 in smuggling oil and \$4.4 in oil surcharges and kickbacks on humanitarian purchases through the Oil-for-Food program. There was just simply no innocent explanation for this. We want the State Department and the intelligence community and the U.N. to know there has to be a full accounting of all Oil-for-Food transactions even if that unaccustomed degree of transparency embarrasses some members of the Security Council. I appreciate Kofi Annan's call to me to tell me that he wanted to restore faith in the ability of the U.N. to do its job and subsequent appointment of Paul Volcker to lead an independent panel.

□ 2145

But we know Mr. Volker has to depend on the goodwill of the U.N., and we do not have the kind of faith where we believe that some in the U.N. will cooperate, since they were so clearly involved in these illegal acts. But we also need to know more than just what happened at the U.N. We also need to know what happened at the U.S. mission, we need to know what our intelligence community knew and now knows. We need their cooperation as well.

#### A CRITIQUE OF RICHARD B. CHENEY, VICE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BURNS). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 2003, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE) is recognized for 60 minutes.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, almost immediately after Senator KERRY chose Senator EDWARDS of North Carolina as his Democratic running mate, the Republican attack dogs were out in full force. The most popular Republican attack was that JOHN EDWARDS does not have the experience to be vice president, and the second most popular, JOHN EDWARDS represents the interests of the trial lawyers.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the American people, has DICK CHENEY's experience paid off for them over the last 3 years? Tonight, I will try to highlight how Vice President CHENEY's experience in the corporate world has led to administration policies that benefit the corporate interests over the interests of all Americans.

I want to start by talking about Halliburton. After spending several decades in Washington here in the House and working for several Republican ad-

ministrations, DICK CHENEY went to Texas in 1995 to run Halliburton. On his watch, Halliburton conducted business with Iraq, Libya and Iran, three countries that at that time supported terrorism and were under strict sanctions from the United States. Despite these sanctions, CHENEY's Halliburton did business with all three countries.

During the 2000 campaign, CHENEY said, "I had a firm policy that we wouldn't do anything in Iraq, even arrangements that were supposedly legal." But while CHENEY was running Halliburton, two of its foreign subsidiaries sold millions of dollars worth of oil services and parts to Saddam Hussein's regime.

Vice President CHENEY ran a company that did businesses with companies that supported terrorism. Is the kind of experience Republicans are pointing to in lauding their vice president?

CHENEY continued to support his former company when he came to Washington as the vice president. We all know that the war in Iraq has been a financial windfall for Halliburton.

We also learned last month, Mr. Speaker, that in the months leading up to the war in Iraq, an undersecretary of defense had a meeting with members of the Bush administration, including the vice president's Chief of Staff, Lewis Libby, in which the undersecretary notified Libby and the others that Halliburton would be awarded a \$1.9 billion defense contract. This meeting contradicts a statement made by Vice President CHENEY last September on Meet the Press in which CHENEY said, "I don't know any of the details of the contract, because I deliberately stayed away from any information on that."

Yet, Mr. Speaker, his own Chief of Staff attended a meeting six months before the war in which secret contingency plans for the Iraqi oil industry that focused only Halliburton were discussed.

Does Vice President CHENEY want the American people to believe that his main staffer, his chief of staff, was at a meeting where contracts for Halliburton were discussed, but that he, the vice president, was never informed about them?

The primary reason Halliburton received billions in no-bid contracts from the Bush administration can be attributed clearly to the cozy relationship between CHENEY and Halliburton. And despite all the problems Halliburton has faced over the last year, the vice president continues to be an unyielding, positive spokesman for the company.

In 2002, CHENEY said, "Halliburton is a fine company and I am pleased that I was associated with the company." I wonder if Vice President CHENEY thought Halliburton was a fine company after it was forced to acknowledge knowledge that it accepted up to \$6 million in kickbacks in its contract work in Iraq? Or does the vice president think that Halliburton is a fine

company now, now that it is under scrutiny over allegations of overcharging the government \$61 million in Iraq? Or was the vice president pleased with his old company's conduct when it received several warnings from the Pentagon that the food it was serving U.S. troops in Iraq was dirty?

Perhaps the vice president overlooks these abuses of our troops and the American taxpayers because he continues to receive money from Halliburton.

Vice President CHENEY tried to squash a story when he appeared on Meet the Press last year. The vice president stated, "And since I left Halliburton to become George Bush's vice president, I have severed all my ties with the company, gotten rid of all my financial interests. I have no financial interests in Halliburton of any kind, and haven't had now for over 3 years."

But despite the vice president's claims, the Congressional Research Service issued a report earlier this year concluding that because CHENEY receives a deferred salary and continues to hold stock interests, he still has a financial interest in Halliburton. In fact, if the company were to go under, the vice president could lose the deferred salary, a salary he is expected to continue to receive this year and next year.

While losing around \$200,000 a year might not put a big dent in the vice president's wallet, he clearly still has a stake in the success of Halliburton.

And the vice president also neglects to mention that he continues to hold more than 433,000 stock options with Halliburton. The Congressional Research Service reports that these stock ties "represent a continuing financial interest in those employers which makes them potential conflicts of interest."

So the vice president misrepresented what he and his staff knew about the initial no-bid contract, as well as continued financial interests in Halliburton. And I ask again, Mr. Speaker, do we want a vice president who continues to benefit from a company that is essentially robbing the American taxpayers of millions of dollars? Is this the kind of leadership Republicans are touting when they praise CHENEY's leadership abilities?

I could go on. I would like to talk briefly, I see that my colleague from Washington is joining me tonight, I would like to talk a little bit about the link between al Qaeda and Iraq and the vice president's comments on that, because sometimes I think, Mr. Speaker, the Republicans admire Vice President CHENEY's tenacity for refusing to accept, despite all the evidence to the contrary, that there is a connection between al Qaeda and Iraq.

Last week, as we know, the Senate Intelligence Committee's report concluded that even though the CIA repeatedly told the White House it did not have any strong evidence linking Iraq to al Qaeda, CHENEY and the rest

of the Bush administration went ahead and characterized a close, well-documented relationship in an attempt to justify to going to war with Iraq. The Senate Intelligence Committee called such linkages murky and conflicting.

Of course, the 9/11 Commission previously went further, reporting last month there did not appear to be a collaborative relationship between Iraq and al Qaeda. Those things are pretty obvious.

Do we have any apology from Vice President CHENEY? No, not even close. The Vice President continues to be in denial. He went so far as to justify this denial by saying that he had reports that the 9/11 Commission did not have to prove the connection between Iraq and al Qaeda, but earlier this month the 9/11 Commission rebutted those claims, saying they had access to all the same intelligence that CHENEY had.

Do the American people want to stick with a Vice President who cannot finally admit he is wrong and remains in denial about something as critical as connections that led us down to war in Iraq?

So on the foreign policy front, again, I think the Vice President has been a complete failure. He erroneously sold Members of Congress on a war that did not need to be waged.

But what about domestic policy? Let us just talk a little bit about that as well. I would like to talk about energy policy and the Energy Task Force which the Vice President was so much involved with. The largest piece of domestic legislation that the Vice President had his fingerprints on clearly is the energy bill and his secret Energy Task Force.

Over the past 3 years, the Bush administration and Congressional Republicans have done nothing to help consumers struggling to pay higher gas prices. When I go home, it is one of the big things my constituents talk about, the higher gas prices. I would argue that essentially the Bush administration and the Vice President, because of their background, are essentially supporting oil and gas companies. They do not have a problem with the price increases.

Vice President CHENEY and Republicans have never been interested in lowering gas prices, and the reason is because high gas prices mean high profits for big oil and gas companies that worked in secret with Vice President CHENEY in crafting the Republican energy bill.

For 3 years now, the Vice President has done everything he can to keep the records of his Energy Task Force secret. This secret task force developed President Bush's energy policy, a policy that was then made into legislation here in Congress, and that legislation passed this House, but it is now stalled in the other body. But, nevertheless, the end result was bad energy policy.

There is no doubt that the energy industry succeeded with its influence during these secret, closed-door meet-

ings in crafting a policy that benefited them rather than benefiting Americans, and now Americans are paying the price the at the pump.

For 3 years, the Vice President has refused to let the American people know who made up in Energy Task Force. For 3 years now, the Vice President has refused to let the American people know how and why the task force came to the conclusions that it did.

What about Enron? Let me just take a few minutes to talk about that, and then I am going to yield to my colleague from Washington State.

Could it be that the Vice President wants to keep the records of his Energy Task Force secret because he wants to continue to distance himself from Enron? After all, you know, Enron has not been looking too good for the last few days, with what happened with their chairman Ken Lay in the last week.

According to a 2002 report by the Committee on Government Reform in the House, seven of the eight recommendations that then Enron chairman Ken Lay gave to Vice President CHENEY miraculously made their way into the final Energy Task Force report. So we know that Enron and Lay, they were very much involved in this report and ultimately the legislation that came out of it.

Back in January 2002, the San Francisco Chronicle released a memo given by Enron Chairman Lay to Vice President CHENEY at a meeting on April 17, 2001. Enron's memo contains recommendations in eight areas. In total, the White House energy plan adopts all or significant portions of Enron's recommendations in seven of these eight areas.

Enron representatives had six meetings with the White House Energy Task Force, including four meetings that occurred before the release of the final report. The White House has consistently refused to disclose what Enron requested during these meetings.

Despite all these meetings and the fact that Enron Chairman Ken Lay was President Bush's largest financial supporter, another reason the administration may want to keep these documents a secret is they do not want the American people to see more collaboration between the Bush administration and former Enron executives.

Now, I ask you, we talked about foreign policy, we talked about domestic policy. Does any of this seem to be a good record? Not only has his energy bill not gone anywhere, but Vice President CHENEY refuses to allow the American people and this Congress to see exactly who helped him craft this energy bill.

Again, I am not surprised, given what happened to Lay last week, that they are going to try to keep it secret. They refuse to open up in detail any of this information.

So, Mr. Speaker, CHENEY's 3 years as Vice President have been abysmal. Per-

haps that is the reason some Republicans in his own party are asking him, for the sake of the Republican Party, to step down.

I thought it was very interesting, with all these attacks that were taking place last week and even on this floor against JOHN EDWARDS, talking about lack of experience and all this other nonsense, that at the same time that EDWARDS was nominated, or asked by JOHN KERRY to be his running mate, we just kept getting more and more reports about how the Republicans might be trying to get rid of DICK CHENEY. It does not seem like that is likely, but it is no surprise, given CHENEY's record on both foreign and domestic policy.

With that, I would like to yield to my colleague here, I see we are joined by a couple of my colleagues, the gentleman from Washington.

Mr. MCDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman very much. I think it is really commendable that the gentleman would get up here at this hour of the night and call this group together to talk about the President and Vice President of the United States.

You know, you think about him, and you realize this man is one heartbeat away from the Presidency. If something should happen to George Bush, he would be our President.

The legendary comedian George Carlin made famous the seven no-no words, and the Vice President has already used one in an exchange with one of his colleagues in the other body. Just picture the situation. Here are Members of the other body getting together for a group picture, kind of like college graduation or a wedding picture or whatever.

In the middle of that, there is an exchange of ideas about the fact that one Member of the other body did not think that the Vice President was being straightforward about the Halliburton issue. And the Vice President of the United States, now, this man is the man we are thinking about would be the next in line to deal with the world leaders, with the prime minister of Germany, with the prime minister of England, with all these people, and the only word that he can think of is a word that, when Bono said it on television at the Academy Awards, all the roof fell down. I mean, everybody was just outraged that this guy would be out on television using a four-letter word.

The Vice President does not even apologize. He says "I am glad I used it. I would use it again."

□ 2200

Obviously, there are different standards for people like Bono and the Vice President of the United States; he can do anything he wants, I guess. And he really has shown that characteristic through his whole behavior. It would really be good if he would come out and be honest and talk about the fact that he has been part of the deception that has gone on in this setting.

Mr. STRICKLAND. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. PALLONE. I yield to the gentleman from Ohio.

Mr. STRICKLAND. The Vice President uttered on the floor of the United States Senate a graphic, sexual obscenity that is, I think, beneath the office. And the gentleman is right, when he was asked about it, he indicated he was not sorry he said it; in fact, he said he felt better. Now, this chamber and in fact much of the country got terribly upset a few months ago when there was an incident during the half-time at the super bowl when Janet Jackson had part of her anatomy exposed. I did not see the super bowl, I did not see the half-time show, so I did not see that incident, but it has been described.

I guess I would ask this of the Vice President or of the American people: what is more harmful in terms of setting an example for the young people of this country, the children of our country, a momentary glimpse of a part of the human anatomy during an entertainment show on TV, or the Vice President of the United States on the floor of the United States Senate using a very graphic sexual obscenity directing it toward a United States Senator? And then I would further ask this question, all of us perhaps lose our tempers sometimes and say things that we should not say and are later sorry for. I know I do, I mean I think that is part of the human condition. But what I found most objectionable about the Vice President's behavior is that hours later, when he had had time to reflect upon his behavior and its possible influence upon the country, that he was asked on Fox News, and I was watching that show; in fact, I followed him on Fox News just a few moments after he had completed his interview, he was asked if he was sorry, and he said no, he had no regrets and, in fact, he felt better.

Now, this is the Vice President of the United States, a person who talks about values, about moral values, and I just think it is quite unfortunate that this incident happened, but I can understand that it happened. As I said, we are all human. We all get angry, perhaps, at times. I confess that I have been guilty of that kind of behavior. But what I found so objectionable was the Vice President's unwillingness, even after he had time to reflect upon it, to admit the error.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Washington.

Mr. McDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, my friend from Ohio is a psychologist, and I am a psychiatrist, and we know a little bit about human behavior, and it is true, we have occasionally gone beyond where we intended to be. But there is a pattern with the Vice President. He is never wrong. He is never wrong.

Now, the 9-11 Commission came out and said that there is no tie between al Qaeda and Iraq, and the Vice President said, I have information here that I never gave them. So they said, well,

give us the information. And he said, no, I am right, because I know what I have in my information here. I mean there is a pattern of behavior here that says, when I say something, it is right, and nobody can change it, nobody can challenge it.

The same is true with holding the meetings in his White House office. I mean when we have all, all the leadership, including Ken Lay, I mean this is the guy that took Enron into the ground and put enormous costs on people all over the west in this country because of the manipulation of what they did; when you have those people in your office and you have a meeting to design the energy policy for the United States and then do not even think you have to tell us who was there, much less what you talked about or what was decided. And then you have the gull to go all the way up to the Supreme Court. Oh, and of course, in order not to have there be any slippage, we will go hunting with one of the members of the Supreme Court, just so that they have a chance over a bottle of beer or, excuse me, a cup of coffee, to talk about what is coming up before the court. This man is never wrong. He is never wrong.

Now, he dismisses it all as just simply people who are unpatriotic or partisan; he has a whole series of things that he brands on people who question him. He cannot be questioned. I cannot wait for the debate between the Vice President and JOHN EDWARDS, a trial attorney. I think this is going to be fun, because even members of his own party have to stand by while he distorts the truth, and I think that he is going to be called to account, to some accountability in the debate which occurs, I think in Cincinnati or Cleveland in Ohio, is that right?

Mr. STRICKLAND. Cleveland, Ohio.

Mr. McDERMOTT. I mean, when we see what the State Department has done, and they tried, and I think Colin Powell actually made a genuine effort to tell the President what was what about Iraq. But the Vice President of the United States saw fit to go out to Langley, that is where the CIA is, out in Langley, Virginia, to go out there 5 times to tell them, look harder at that data. You are not coming up with the right answer.

Mr. STRICKLAND. Mr. Speaker, I just want to support what my friend from Washington State has said. I want to read something that the Vice President said on August 26, 2002 in a speech that he gave on that date. He said, "Simply stated, there is no doubt that Saddam Hussein has weapons of mass destruction. There is no doubt that he is amassing them to use against our friends, against our allies, and against us."

Now, the Vice President could have said, we have reason to believe, or I believe, or Saddam Hussein may have weapons of mass destruction, but the words he chose to use were the words "no doubt." There is no doubt. And as

a result of that thinking, we have lost nearly 900 American lives in Iraq. Many, many thousands of our soldiers have been terribly wounded because the Vice President and others in the administration were willing to say "there is no doubt" when, in fact, there was great doubt, significant doubt. And I believe that if the American people had been told that Saddam Hussein may have weapons of mass destruction, but we do not know for sure, I believe the American people would have supported letting the inspectors have a longer period of time, time that they requested, to make sure that we knew whether or not Saddam Hussein had these weapons of mass destruction before we sent our soldiers into harm's way.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, if I could just say, in addition to that, I am sure it would have influenced the vote here in the House. I did not vote for the resolution in part, in large part because of what the gentleman said, which is that I thought that there needed to be more of an effort to reach out to our allies and not act unilaterally. But I distinctly remember being on the floor that day and having Members come up to me and say that they were going to vote for the resolution to go to war because of the representations that were being made by the President. They said, the President is telling us he has this information, and we believe him, and that is why I am going to vote that way.

So I will say I have no doubt that it might have gone the other way on the resolution if, as the gentleman said, it had not been represented by this administration, both the President and the Vice President, that there was more than enough evidence to prove that the weapons of mass destruction were there.

I yield to the gentleman from Washington.

Mr. McDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, I think one of the things the gentleman is saying gets to one of the things that is really troublesome about this. The American people do not know at a given time what the facts are. They assume that the President, that is his responsibility to do it. He is gathering information, he is gathering intelligence, he is making reasonable decisions. And basically, we put our trust in him.

Now, when you put your trust in someone, and then it is shown categorically that it is not true, as by the 9-11 Commission, you have a man who cannot accept reality. I mean the members on the Commission, they were not all Democrats, it was not all Republicans, it was not people who are far to the right or far to the left or anything else; it was a mixture of very well-qualified people to sit in judgment on these issues. And when they make a judgment and the Vice President says I do not believe it, I simply do not, how could somebody like that make decisions for us?

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, the chairman of the Commission was the governor that I served under in the State legislature in New Jersey for 6 years, a staunch Republican who has actually been out there campaigning against me on occasion. So I mean you cannot ever convince me that Governor Kean was not doing what he thought was the right thing, and is a very knowledgeable and intelligent man, even though I disagree with him on a lot of issues, so the gentleman is absolutely right.

Mr. McDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman will yield, the Vice President, not only on war issues, big issues, but let us get down to little issues like millions of dollars that he gets in residual payments from Halliburton. Here is a guy who says, I have no connection to those people. Yet the newspapers report that his assistant is there when they give the contract, the no-bid contract to Halliburton. Now, the ability to look into the camera and absolutely misrepresent the truth is a real skill. This guy is very qualified at this. I mean the facts are in the newspapers.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BURNS). Members are reminded not to make improper references to the Vice President such as accusations of dishonesty. The gentleman may proceed in order.

Mr. McDERMOTT. The question of what is in the paper, I suppose, is always a question of whether that is the truth or not, but the truth sometimes categorically is in opposition to what the Vice President says.

Now, of course, the people have to make their mind up about that. They can say, well, you know, we do not think he is telling the truth, or they can say well, maybe he forgot, but I do not know how you would forget that you were getting millions of dollars in residual payments from Halliburton. I do not know how one would say they forgot that one of your aids, your number one guy is the guy who was there explaining that they got the new contract. People will see that and, I think when they think about that, and they come into this election and then they say, do I trust him to take care of us? If the Cuban missile crisis came, would you want somebody who cannot accept reality?

One of the things that John Kennedy did, one of the really important things for us to understand is, he got us into the Bay of Pigs and when they confronted him with it, he said, the buck stops here. I was wrong. When it came to the Cuban missile crisis, he said to Bobby, go out and get everybody on both sides of this issue, on all sides of this issue. I want to hear people who are telling me that I am right, people who are telling me that I am wrong; I want to hear the whole thing. Now a man who knows it himself what the answer is, has the information in his own pocket here, and does not share it with

the 9-11 Commission, that does not sound like the kind of person one would want to trust with our youngsters.

I mean I had the experience during the Vietnam war of taking care of casualties, and I took care of casualties who were people who went to Vietnam believing something because they were told by their President, and they went there and found out it was not true.

□ 2215

And they came back really messed up by that experience, and you have had a report already coming out of the New England Journal of Medicine talking about the fact that 1 in 5 are going to come back from this war, because the leadership of this country would not tell them what really was happening, they are going to be messed up from this, and this President, this vice president, he just does not seem to be bothered by that. It is quite amazing when you think about it.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentlewoman from Illinois (Ms. SCHAKOWSKY) who is joining us now.

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from New Jersey for coming down to the floor this late in the evening and giving the rest of us an opportunity to talk about what is a very important issue, and that is top leadership in our country. And something that I have thought about for a long time from the moment I received this holiday card from the Cheneys, one of the things about being in the United States Congress, I do not know that we are so popular necessarily, but we are on a lot of lists, and we get holiday cards from dignitaries, some from all over the world and am honored to get holiday cards from the top leadership in our country. And it is a lovely card. It shows the interior of the residence of the vice president and has a pleasant greeting that you might expect, "Our best wishes to you and your family in this holiday season and throughout the year ahead, Lynne Cheney and DICK CHENEY," and I thought that was really nice and getting ready to hang it up along with my others, and then I looked at the quote that is here.

And generally when there is a quote, it is something inspiring like "peace on earth, good will toward mankind," et cetera. And I read this quote, and it says, "And if a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without his notice," meaning God's notice, "is it probable that an empire can rise without his aid," speaking about God's aid.

I looked at that again, because I got a kind of shudder when I read it. "And if a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without his notice, is it probable that an empire can rise without his aid?"

And what I read in this, and I do not know if I read it wrong, is that this notion of an empire rising with the assistance of God. And I was really upset by this, that this was not exactly this notion of peace on earth; but, rather,

this depicted this kind of view of building an empire and doing it with God on our side. And quite frankly, I found this troubling.

The vice president subsequently was questioned about it, and he just sort of offhandedly said that Lynne had picked out the quote and he had not really paid much attention to it, but I found it particularly, at the time that it was received while we were and have been engaged in this war in Iraq that many do feel is part of a vision of building an empire, to be a very, very chilling notion.

I wanted to also talk a little bit about the Halliburton connection, and of course all of us do that at some risk, because if we run into the vice president, we may be subject to some unpleasant language, as Senator LEAHY found on the floor of the Senate. But things that are undisputable that the vice president has said about Halliburton and his connection with Halliburton, "gets unfairly maligned simply because of their past association with me."

And then he said in January 22, 2004, "I would not know how to manipulate the government contract process if I wanted to."

And then also that same day, January 22, 2004, "I severed my ties with Halliburton when I became a candidate for vice president in August of 2000." In fact, however, the vice president received \$178,436 in deferred payment last year from Halliburton, and so that was not entirely accurate.

But perhaps more troubling are some of the issues that have been raised that really do question whether or not there was any connection between the vice president's office and the contracts with Halliburton, which it seems that U.S. officials have estimated that the Texas company's Iraq deals, Halliburton, from everything from oil repairs to meals for the troop would eventually total something like \$18 billion.

Now, \$18 billion, when I was in the State Legislature in Springfield, that was getting a little bit close to the budget for the State of Illinois, and I am sure that it is an amount of money that does exceed the budget of many States and certainly of many countries around the world. \$18 billion is a lot of money.

But what was found was that in fact in the fall of 2002, preparing for war, and this is the fall of 2002, we had not voted yet, or at least a decision had not been made yet to go to war, the President and the vice president at the time were still saying that this was not a done deal that we were going to war; but in making preparations, the Pentagon sought and received the assent of senior Bush administration officials, including the vice president's chief of staff, before hiring the Halliburton company to develop secret plans, secret plans, for restoring Iraq's oil facilities. That is what Pentagon officials told Congressional investigators.

So secret plans were being developed, and at that time Halliburton, after connecting with the vice president's office, the vice president's chief of staff, gets this relatively small contract. I think it was about a billion 4. That is all, just a billion 4 contract, kind of walking-around money.

These are, after all, the statements about the lack of connection with the vice president. It says on March 5, 2003, a Pentagon e-mail sent by a U.S. Army Corps of Engineer official said, the e-mail said, "Douglas Feith, who reports to Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz, approved arrangements for the contract to rebuild Iraq's oil industry, contingent on informing White House tomorrow that we anticipate no issues since action has been coordinated with the W.H. VP." That was an e-mail.

Now, we know that to be true. That is not a speculation. This is an e-mail. This is a document that we have that is suggesting people who have no reason to malign the vice president, that that kind of connection was made that suggests very strongly, to say the least, that the vice president of the United States, who was the former CEO of Halliburton, that before major multi-billion dollar contracts were awarded, that there was a checkoff.

Now, the vice president says they still stand by their statements that there is no connection.

Mr. McDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. PALLONE. I yield to the gentleman from Washington (Mr. McDERMOTT).

Mr. McDERMOTT. We have read those stories. Can we think of any explanation for why the vice president would say that he has no contact with this in the face of that e-mail?

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentlewoman from Illinois (Ms. SCHAKOWSKY).

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. The only thing one could think of is that for some reason, that the vice president's chief of staff did not tell him or something like that, but it seems to me if anyone feels the necessity to check with the vice president's office, whether or not he was involved directly in conversation, then I think the American people need to question that connection. Why would anybody need to do that or feel the need to do that? This is very important.

Let me just say this. We talk a lot about separation of church and State, but in some ways this lack of separation between corporations that are looking to make profits and the public interest, and what our mandate and the mandate of all elected officials is to protect the public interest. This blurring of those divisions is very, very troubling. Are the interests of private corporations going right up to the vice president's office? That is a worthwhile thing for Americans to know about.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. STRICKLAND).

Mr. STRICKLAND. Just recently, the Columbus Dispatch, the major newspaper in Ohio's capital city, had an editorial, and they pointed out that former Halliburton employees have made accusations that Halliburton housed some of their employees in hotel rooms that cost \$10,000 per night, \$10,000 per night, paid for, obviously, through these contracts, which ultimately are financed by the American taxpayer.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, reclaiming my time, could I ask what hotel charges \$10,000 a night?

Mr. STRICKLAND. I was amazed, but as I checked into it, it was not a misprint, \$10,000 per night. Apparently there are hotels that have those kinds of prices.

There were also accusations made that Halliburton was paying \$100 for one bag of laundry, and then there were further reports that when a contract with Halliburton to provide food to our troops was cancelled, that the cost of feeding our troops declined by 40 percent.

Now, this was information contained in an editorial in the Columbus Dispatch, and it was based upon information that was coming from a former Halliburton employee. And in that editorial there was a call for Halliburton and Vice President CHENEY to be forthcoming in explaining whatever relationship may have been involved in Halliburton's achieving this kind of contract. And the emphasis was made that when you have a contract that is a cost-plus contract, there is really no incentive to hold down the costs.

And so while we are struggling here in this country to meet the basic necessities of our citizens, we have senior citizens without adequate access to prescription drugs, we have children that are not being adequately educated, we have an infrastructure in our communities that is crumbling and falling apart while we cannot get a transportation bill passed, because the President is unwilling to spend money on the infrastructure needs in this country, while we are pouring money into Iraq, we have these outrageous contracts, which are enriching Halliburton and draining resources from our country. It is quite disturbing, and I do think the vice president, the administration owes the American people an explanation.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentlewoman from Illinois (Ms. SCHAKOWSKY).

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. I want to correct something. First of all, in that first small contract, and I was making a joke about \$1.4 billion, and I was wrong about that, it was only a \$1.4 million contract; but according to the General Accounting Office, the Pentagon acted improperly in tapping Halliburton company to plan the post-war repair of Iraq oil fields, a small-scale task order that opened the door to a much wider role for the company in Iraq, the General Accounting Office said in a report

released Monday. That was the middle of June of this year.

The contingency planning task was valued at only \$1.4 million but was significant, because it enabled the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to award a no-bid contract to Halliburton to fulfill a larger mission of actually restoring Iraq's oil industry to pre-war capacity.

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I think the fact that a number of these contracts too were no bid contracts, that some of which ended up with Halliburton actually paying fines of engaging as they did in the oil that they were importing and overcharging and overcharging for employees, that ultimately had to be either ended or fines were paid. But, nonetheless, the bottom line is that this is a company that it appears is making about \$18 billion overall in contracts in Iraq. And if this is in part at least the consequence of some kind of or benefited by a special relationship, then I think that the American people are entitled to know the full facts about that.

Mr. PALLONE. I appreciate the gentlewoman's information because I think that we have to deal with the facts and the gentlewoman is giving us some real factual information there about Halliburton, and how they benefited and the vice president's connection to it.

Mr. McDERMOTT. May I take a minute to make a recommendation to my colleagues and anybody watching, there is a book called "The Imperial Hubris." It is written by anonymous. That means this is somebody who worked for CIA for a number of years and they are not allowed to put their name on here, but the subtitle is "Why the West is Losing the War on Terror."

What we are talking about tonight is the character of the leadership of Mr. CHENEY is clearly related to why we are having so much difficulty in Iraq. They will not listen to people. They give private contracts to the private industries and say, you guys do all of this stuff, and their friends are making money hand over fist, and yet our kids are dying over there.

Mr. PALLONE. And also they continue to deny the reality. I mean, after the CIA report came out, it was either today or yesterday, that the President, President Bush was out there saying that the war has resulted in the U.S. being in less danger of attack and terrorism is down, the whole thing. And the Democratic candidate, Senator KERRY dispute that and said, Where are the facts to back this up?

In the last few years we know that North Korea has more nuclear weapons than it had before, 3 or 4 times as many. There is no question that Iran is developing nuclear capability, I mean, the list goes on. Afghanistan, I think KERRY said, has basically been made into a sideshow. We do not even hear about what is going on there.

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. I thought the suggestion that really takes the cake,

that even surprised me was that while we are being told that the world is safer than it was before, we are being told that plans are being considered to postpone the November elections. I never heard such a thing like that, that we should be so filled with fear that maybe even the November elections would have to be moved. I think all Americans ought to be up in arms about that.

Mr. PALLONE. Our colleague from Washington addressed that issue the other night in a special order, and he pointed out very effectively I thought, number one, that during the War of 1812 he was talking about President Madison, the Capitol was literally burning and the White House too I guess, and we have still had elections. And then he mentioned the Civil War, the Capitol was under siege, literally being bombarded and we had elections. What could be more threatening from a terrorist point of view than actually being under siege and yet we had elections.

Mr. STRICKLAND. I think you can go downstairs here in this Capitol building and look in the stairwell and actually see pock marks where bullets were fired during that period of time right here in this building, the Capitol building. And Abraham Lincoln in 1864 was really in danger of losing his presidency because the war was not going well. There had been some recent losses and there was wide spread criticism of President Lincoln as the President and some of his advisors were advising him to postpone the election. And this is what President Lincoln said on November 10, 1864, "We cannot have free government without elections and if the rebellion could force us to forego or postpone a national election, it might already fairly claim to have concurred or ruined us."

We are strong people. We can take a lot. The American people have backbone. They have got courage. There is nothing that terrorists can do that ought to have the power to interfere with our ability to have a national election on November 2 as planned, absolutely nothing. And I think to imply that those who wish us harm would have that kind of power to influence our national purpose and our national behavior in that way is giving greater credibility to the terrorists than they deserve.

We are going to have that election on November 2, I believe, but it does bother me, it truly bothers me that this would be something that would even be considered by this government. It really bothers me. If we did not cancel or postpone elections during the Civil War, if we did not cancel or postpone elections during World War II, why would we even contemplate the possibility of postponing this upcoming presidential election.

One more thing, if I can say this before I yield back, we all want to trust each other, but what kind of motivation may such a provision inspire?

What if it was 3 days before the election and the poll was taken and showed perhaps the party in power was not going to do very well, would there be incentive to perhaps indicate to the American people that there was a justification for postponing the election? I would hope not.

But even to have this as a consideration I find alarming, appalling, and as I said earlier tonight, I would just hope the President and every Member of this chamber, Republican and Democrat alike, would reaffirm to the American people that we intend to have our election on November 2 as planned, and that there is nothing that terrorists can do to interfere with that Democratic process.

Mr. PALLONE. I yield to the gentlewoman.

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. Just on that point of the November 2 election, the gentleman was discussing what possible motivation, the last thing that we want to do is to create in people's minds a fear about voting on November 2. What our democracy is based on is the fullest possible participation and Americans have nothing to fear but fear itself. And what I worry about is that there is a fire being instilled that somehow that people, that something could happen and it would not be safe to vote. Quite the contrary.

This is the land of the free and the home of the brave. And the most important unit of our democracy is our vote. And to even imply that we would at a time when we want to declare and spread democracy around the world, even consider the postponement of an election is completely unacceptable.

I think that all of us have to, as leaders in this country, make sure that that notion is stomped out immediately, that no matter what happens that we will go forward with an election on November 2. And if there is some kind of a threat about that, if there is some specific threat, after all, we did not raise the color from yellow to orange, if there is some specific threat that is known, then share that with the American people. Let us know what people need to defend themselves against and protect themselves.

The spreading of a generalized fear and then connecting that to the election is as specious I think as connecting Saddam Hussein with al Qaeda over and over and over again, which now the 9/11 Commission and the Senate Intelligence Committee has said there is no connection. There is no connection. Everybody ought to plan to vote confidently on November 2.

Mr. PALLONE. I appreciate the gentlewoman's comments and I agree. If we do not enshrine democracy and say that is the main thing we are about, then we might as well forget it. I think that was my colleague from Ohio's point as well.

I think we have maybe a few minutes left. I want to say I started out tonight talking about elections in a sense because I became very upset last night

when I saw my Republican colleagues get up and basically malign Senator EDWARDS, the Democratic choice for Vice President, and the attack dogs were out in full force. And basically they kept saying that EDWARDS did not have the experience to be Vice President, and how he only represents the interests of the trial lawyers.

After I listened to everything that we collectively said this evening in our hour or so, it made me realize that Vice President CHENEY's life story and life experience certainly did not compare in any way to Senator EDWARDS.

I wanted to ask the question because I asked a few questions when I started, would you rather have a Vice President whose experience outside of Washington comes from running a corporate giant that was, during the time he was running it, doing business with the nations that engage in terrorist activities or all the other things that we have talked about here tonight, or would you rather have a Vice President like EDWARDS who worked to defend the little guy against the corporate giant?

Every time they bring up lack of experience or the trial lawyer experience of JOHN EDWARDS, all I keep thinking is that he spent his time as a trial lawyer looking to defend the little guys against the very corporate giants that the Bush and CHENEY administration essentially come from. And unlike CHENEY, EDWARDS spent decades fighting for families and children hurt by the indifference and negligence in many case of these large corporations. And he was standing up against the powerful insurance industry and their lawyers in a sense. And he was always helping families to overcome the challenges.

I could give you some examples but I am not going to do that tonight. But I just, it just really riles me when I hear the Republicans stand up for these guys for this team, the Bush-Cheney team, who obviously come from the oil industry, always out there with the corporate interests, certainly based on what we said tonight in CHENEY's case continues to march to the tune, if you will, of these corporate interests including the company that he was in charge of for so many years.

Then we have got Senator EDWARDS who on the other hand was always out there fighting for the little guy. Needless to say, I think it is time for a change and if you are ever going to put the experience of these two candidates for Vice President against each other, there is no way that you are going to do anything but vote for Senator EDWARDS.

With that I wanted to thank my colleagues again. I thought they were really great tonight, and I appreciate the comments that they made, particularly those concluding comments about our democracy being at stake which is the thing that we cherish the most.