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The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 2003, the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. Delahunt) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Mr. Speaker, it was approximately a year ago, in fact I think it was better than a year ago now, that myself, a number of my colleagues, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. Hoeffel), the gentleman from Washington (Mr. Inslee), the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. Strickland), and, of course, the gentleman from Hawaii (Mr. Abercrombie) took to the floor to express our concerns about what was transpiring in the Middle East, with a special focus on Iraq. We have done that on a rather regular basis over the course of the past year, and we have come to call this hour the "Iraq Watch," where we have a discussion among ourselves for the benefit of those that are viewing our conversation through C-SPAN.

At the very beginning, we expressed our concern that American credibility was at stake, as well, of course, as providing an opportunity to observe the competence of this White House in terms of its conduct of the war in Iraq. And, tragically, unfortunately, many of our concerns have materialized.

I think every American remembers rather clearly the multiple statements, not just from the President and the Vice President, but from every single official representing the administration, whether from the Department of Defense, the Department of State, clearly from the White House, wherein they articulated the rationale for the military intervention in Iraq based on two particular concerns. One, of course, was expressed by the President and others when he continued to state that Saddam Hussein possessed weapons of mass destruction and that a nuclear weapons program was underway and that at any time we

could be faced with the vision of a mushroom cloud somewhere in the world, specifically in the United States.

Well, I think there is a consensus among the American people and among Members of this institution, as well as a number of members of the administration that that particular basis for the military intervention in Iraq, the concern about weapons of mass destruction, did not materialize, and that the intelligence was faulty.

It was the former United Nations' inspector, David Kay, who received plaudits and kudos and respect, and deservedly so, from Members on both sides of the aisle, when he was designated by this administration to travel to Iraq and to develop a cadre of experts to assist him in the discovery of where those weapons of mass destruction were located.

I am sure many Americans remember the Secretary of Defense, Donald Rumsfeld, indicating that we knew where those weapons were; that they were around the Tikrit area and outside of Baghdad. Well, of course, again, that intelligence did not produce the location, and the statement of Mr. Kay later was that Saddam Hussein did not have weapons of mass destruction. In fact, he did not have a nuclear weapons program.

In testimony before the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, he made a statement that was emblazoned on the front page of Newsweek Magazine, which has been repeated again and again, and that statement was: "We were all wrong." "We were all wrong." There was also a statement from a newspaper published in Great Britain that I think is worth repeating, and it is a statement made by David Kay. "The former chief inspector warned yesterday that the United States is in grave danger of destroying its credibility at home and abroad if it doesn't own up to the mistakes it's made in Iraq."

And while there has been some acknowledgment that the weapons of mass destruction that purportedly existed in Iraq are not there, there never has been a definitive statement coming from the White House that would support the conclusion reached by Mr. Kay.

In fact, the Vice President, Mr. Cheney, stated that the weapons of mass destruction might still be found in Iraq; and Mr. Kay's response was, "What worries me about Cheney's statement is I think people will hold out for a hail Mary pass, delay the inevitable, looking back at what went wrong and believe we have enough evidence now to say that the intelligence process and the policy process," I repeat that, "the policy process that used that information did not work at the level of effectiveness that we require in the age that we live in."

Well, I think all Americans, or most Americans, know that there are no weapons of mass destruction in Iraq.

Of course the other most prominent rationale for the military intervention in Iraq was a purported relationship between Saddam Hussein and the terrorist organization that we all know so well, al Qaeda.

In fact, in a letter sent to the Speaker of the House and the President of the Senate just prior to the invasion of Iraq and signed by the President, the President puts forth in what I would submit is rather clear and unequivocal terms that, "I determine," this is President Bush, "that reliance on the United States of further diplomatic and other peaceful means alone will neither adequately protect the national security of the United States against the continuing threat posed by Iraq nor likely lead to enforcement of all relevant National Security Council resolutions regarding Iraq, and acting pursuant to the Constitution and the public law," which this Congress passed authorizing that military intervention, "is consistent with the United States and other countries continuing to take the necessary actions against international terrorists and terrorist organizations, including those nations," the clear implication being the nation of Iraq, "organizations or persons who planned, authorized, committed or aided the terrorist attacks that occurred on September 11, 2001, the date of our national tragedy."

Well, recently a report was issued by the so-called 9/11 Commission, which was the subject of much debate and discussion over the course of this past weekend. I think it is important to explore in some detail that report and have a conversation about those allegations that were used by this White House as a rationale for the invasion of Iraq.

Let me read from the pertinent section of the report. The report reviews the activities of Osama bin Laden and al Qaeda, and now I am quoting from the report: "A small group of al Qaeda operatives subsequently traveled to Iran and Hezbollah camps in Lebanon for training in explosives, intelligence, and security. Bin Laden reportedly showed particular interest in Hezbollah's truck bombing tactics in Lebanon in 1983 that killed 241 United States Marines. We have seen strong, by indirect, evidence that his organization did in fact play some," as yet unknown, "role in the Kobar attack."

Let me repeat that again for emphasis. Osama bin Laden went to Iran, went to Iran and Hezbollah camps in Lebanon, in Lebanon.

Now, again reading from the report, "bin Laden also explored possible cooperation with Iraq during his time in Sudan," in Sudan, "despite his opposition to Hussein's secular regime." Bin Laden in fact at one time sponsored anti-Saddam Islamists in Iraqi Kurdistan.

The Sudanese to protect their own ties with Iraq reportedly persuaded bin Laden to cease the support and arrange for contacts between Iraq and al Qaeda. A senior Iraqi intelligence officer reportedly made three visits to Sudan, finally meeting bin Laden in 1994. This is some 3 years after the first gulf war. Bin Laden is said to have requested space to establish training camps as well as assistance in procuring weapons but Iraq apparently never responded. There have been reports that contacts between Iraq and al Qaeda also occurred after bin Laden had returned to Afghanistan, but they do not appear to have resulted in a collaborative relationship. Two senior bin Laden associates have adamantly denied that any ties existed between al Qaeda and Iraq. We have no credible evidence that Iraq and al Qaeda cooperated on attacks against the United States.

Those two senior Iraqi operatives were captured. One was captured last July. He was a al Anni who reportedly had a meeting with Muhammed Atta in the Czech Republic, in Prague, back in April 2001. Much has been made of that particular encounter. Both the CIA and the FBI concluded that that meeting never occurred. Yet we continue to hear it, particularly from the Vice President. He cannot let go, it would appear.

Mr. BURTON of Indiana. Would my colleague yield for just about a 5-second question?

Mr. DELAHUNT. Of course.

Mr. BURTON of Indiana. I have heard the gentleman's arguments. I hope my good and dear friend from Massachusetts will stick around for my response to what he has said.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Mr. Speaker, I am looking forward to hearing his response. I would be happy to engage.

Mr. BURTON of Indiana. We are good buddies.

Mr. DELAHUNT. We are dear friends.

Mr. BURTON of Indiana. I would like the gentleman to hear my response.

Mr. DELAHUNT. I look forward to that. If I am not here in the Chamber, that does not mean that I am not watching it on C-SPAN. But I can assure the gentleman we will be back here tomorrow night to respond to his response and correct any unintentional mistakes that he makes in the course of his response.

With that, I yield to the gentleman from Pennsylvania.

Mr. HOEFFEL. I thank the gentleman from Massachusetts for yielding. This may be a breakthrough tonight. We have, through the 15 months that we have been handling the Iraq Watch duties on the floor, talked about how we would love to be joined by our Republican colleagues in a good-faith discussion about what is happening in Iraq, to discuss the pros and the cons and to question one another, talk to one another about what is working and what is not working. I do not want to put anybody on the spot, but I would be delighted to have a discussion right now. I am sure the gentleman from Massachusetts would yield and I would yield time to anybody who wanted to ask a question or challenge what we might have said.

Mr. DELAHUNT. We can make it a 2-hour conversation. I think that would be informative and hopefully educational.

Mr. HOEFFEL. This is not a challenge. It is an invitation.

In any event, I thank the gentleman from Massachusetts for talking about the whole question of whether or not the connection exists between al Qaeda and Saddam Hussein, a connection that the Vice President has repeatedly invoked. At one point the President himself tried to straighten out the Vice President and said, wait a minute, there is no evidence that Saddam Hussein was behind 9/11. Yet the Vice President has continued to make this accusation, even in the face of the 9/11 Commission staff report that suggests that there was no working relationship, no collaborative relationship between Saddam Hussein and al Qaeda.

There is no doubt that the inability of the coalition to secure Iraq is a tremendous impediment to everything that we are trying to achieve. I certainly share the goals of President Bush in establishing a peaceful and stable Iraq with a representative government, hopefully a flourishing democracy; but that fine goal and all the yardsticks leading up to it cannot be achieved without security. We are going to have no success with reconstruction, we will not have a legitimate turnover of sovereignty on June 30 without security. We cannot have elections without security.

I wanted to do something I have not done before during Iraq Watch, which we started in, I think it was, April 2003. I wanted to read a few words that were spoken at a rally in Los Angeles on June 5 by a young man named Dante Zappala. Dante's brother, Sergeant Sherwood Baker, a member of the Pennsylvania National Guard, was killed in Iraq on April 26, 2004. I have met with Sherwood's parents, Celeste and Al Zappala. They gave me a copy of their other son's comments regarding Sherwood Baker's death. These are the words of Dante Zappala. I will have them entered into the RECORD. They are way too long to read tonight. I wanted to read the first paragraph and part of the last paragraph of these remarks. On June 5, Dante Zappala said of his brother Sherwood Baker:

``The tragedy that touches so many people in so many corners of the world, the tragedy of war, the tragedy of violence and sudden death, touched me on April 26 when my brother, Sergeant Sherwood Baker, was killed in an explosion in Baghdad. I speak today with my voice and with the voice of the countless others who have suffered personal loss as a result of this war, those many people with no microphone in front of them, those many people with no one to listen to their pain. As big brothers do, Sherwood protected me, he carried me, and he taught me."`

Dante went on to express his frustrations with our policy in Iraq and then he ended his statement with the following:

``We do not benefit from the deaths of our soldiers, nor do we benefit from the deaths of the Iraqi people. To honor Sherwood, I have vowed to follow his path, to lift my head and go to work. Our duty is to spread truth. Our duty is to combat the lies, the misrepresentations, the fear, the mongering and the people who mean to ruin our belief in this country. I have made a promise to my brother and that is to do as he would do, to not be angry about my circumstances, to not let bitterness overcome my heart, but to proceed with hope.`

“Today and in the days ahead, do not let your anger carry you. Allow your desire to make change carry you. Allow the compassion towards humanity to carry you. Ride your commitment to peace. Share your soul with your country. Share your values with the world. Make it your job.”

Mr. Speaker, I find these words remarkable. A family devastated by the loss of a son and brother, and yet this brother, speaking in Los Angeles, calling upon the better sides of our nature, calling upon all of us to put anger and frustration aside and to talk about compassion toward humanity.

The pain that so many American families have suffered as a result of this war is immense. The sacrifices that the armed services have made, the men and women, the loss of life has been tragic. I am sure it is true to say that they were proud to serve and in virtually all cases proud to honor their country, were there because they wanted to be there, and made a magnificent sacrifice to try to bring peace and stability to Iraq. What angers me, and I try to be inspired by Danta Zappala and not resort to anger, but what angers me, though, is the continuous reputations, he referenced them in his statement, the continued attempts to connect the Saddam Hussein regime with 9-11, a connection that is bogus, a connection that the gentleman just said was not made by the CIA, denied by the FBI, and yet the Vice President continues to want to use that nonexistent connection as a justification for taking us to war with half truths and with deceptions.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Mr. Speaker, again, I think it is absolutely critical to understand that there is no one that is unhappy with the removal of Saddam Hussein from power. But the question that we are posing here tonight is the allegation that there was a collaborative relationship between al Qaeda and the Saddam Hussein Iraqi regime. And what we are talking about is the credibility of the White House, the President, and, therefore, the United States.

As I said earlier, we discovered what happened when it came to the issue of weapons of mass destruction, and here we are again, even after the report by the 9-11 Commission, even after a statement by David Kay, not only relating to the issue of weapons of mass destruction, but the relationship between al Qaeda and Saddam Hussein.

Mr. BURTON of Indiana. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. DELAHUNT. I yield to the gentleman from Indiana.

Mr. BURTON of Indiana. Mr. Speaker, I do not know if my colleague has read anything that Lee Hamilton, the Democrat co-chairman of the 9-11 Commission, had to say on the News Hour with Jim Lehrer on June 16, just last week, 2004. Let me read what Lee Hamilton said: “We have solid reporting of senior-level contacts between Iraq and al Qaeda going back a decade. Credible information indicates that Iraq and al Qaeda discussed safe haven and reciprocal nonaggression. Since “Operation Enduring Freedom,” we have solid evidence of the presence in Iraq of al Qaeda members, including some that have been in Baghdad. And then Chairman Kean of the committee, along with

Chairman Hamilton, said that there definitely were a number of contacts. Chairman Kean called these contacts shadowy, and the administration agrees with them. These were contacts between a deadly terrorist organization that was seeking support in a country that the administration knew had supported other terrorist operations.

So to say that nothing was going on, I mean they did not meet to have tea and crumpets. They did not meet just to have an ice cream sundae.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Mr. Speaker, I look forward to this continuing conversation this evening. Again, the report refers to contacts that were made back in 1994. If we talk about contacts, it was the Bush administration, the Bush One administration, that had contacts with Saddam Hussein that dated back from 1982 when he was removed from the terrorist list, when there was an embassy installed in Baghdad, when we provided him with intelligence, when we provided him with the ingredients for weapons of mass destruction, when we transferred to him, when we transferred to him, dual-use technologies.

I have a chart behind me that would establish without any doubt whatsoever, it is a CRS report, that in the 1980s, we had multiple contacts, and we should not be surprised that in 1990, it was discovered that he had a nuclear weapons program because it was the then-Bush administration and its predecessor that provided the components to do exactly that. The contacts that the gentleman from Indiana refers to occurred in 1994, and it was as a result of a request from the government of Sudan, where Osama bin Laden was living. The Iraqi official that visited Saddam Hussein heard what he had to say, returned to Iraq, and there was no further contact.

Mr. BURTON of Indiana. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. DELAHUNT. I continue to yield to the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. Burton).

Mr. BURTON of Indiana. Mr. Speaker, since we are going back in history, let me just say that we had the attack on the World Trade Center the first time in 1993; in 1996 we had the Khobar Towers; in 1998, we had embassy attacks in Nairobi; in 2000, we had the USS Cole, all during the previous administration. And during that time when Osama bin laden was in the Sudan, there were 13 known-terrorist training camps under his control, and the CIA reported those to the previous administration, and nothing was done about it.

So when we start talking about this administration's being asleep at the switch, the fact is that President Bush, when he took over, decided to do something about it because there were contacts between al Qaeda and Saddam Hussein. Uday Hussein had one of the leaders of al Qaeda just last year in Baghdad for medical treatment. They had a very close relationship.

So my question to my colleagues is this: Why did the previous administration not, when they knew there were 13 terrorist training camps in the Sudan, they knew that Osama bin

Laden was there, they knew that the CIA had talked about it and said let us go in and get him, and they did not do a doggone thing after all these attacks on U.S. installations?

Mr. DELAHUNT. Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Washington (Mr. Inslee).

Mr. INSLEE. Mr. Speaker, I will give the gentleman a nonanswer answer. The nonanswer is we could pose another question, which is why did the first President Bush not go in and eliminate Saddam Hussein when he had that information as well? And that is an interesting historical issue, but it is one that is not pertinent to why I came here tonight, and I would like to address that issue.

I think the issue is that Congress has a responsibility to fulfill now, which is to hold the administration accountable if, in fact, it created a false impression in the American people. And this is an interesting academic issue, whether it was contacts or collaboration or something more, but the bottom line is the President enjoyed some popular support for this war based on two pillars: the first pillar being his assertion that Saddam had weapons of mass destruction, and that has now by and large been shown to be a falsehood; and the second pillar was that Saddam Hussein was responsible for killing over 2,000 Americans on September 11.

And that was the impression that this President created. In fact, in a poll taken in September, 2003, 69 percent of Americans said they believed Saddam Hussein was personally involved in the attacks.

Here is the question I have, and then I will answer it: Where did 69 percent of the American people get the impression that Saddam Hussein was personally involved in the attacks of September 11? Did they get it from just reading The New York Times? I do not think so. Did they get it just watching Dan Rather? I do not think so. Did they get it from reading the penny press at home? I do not think so. They got it from President George Bush, who did everything possible to create the impression that Iraq was associated with the attack, an ally, in the attack of September 11.

Why do I say that? Because that is the language President Bush used. On May 1, 2003, he said: "The liberation of Iraq is a crucial advance in the campaign against terror. We have removed an ally of al Qaeda and cut off a source of terrorist funding."

The interesting thing that I challenge anyone to show me, the September 11 Commission reached what appears to me to be a factual conclusion. It appears to me to be the most rational conclusion I think we can make on the evidence we have. They said: "We have no credible evidence that Iraq and al Qaeda cooperated on attacks against the United States." That is what they said. I believe that is most likely to be true.

When did President George Bush ever say we have no credible evidence that al Qaeda cooperated on attacks against the United States? When the President of the United States was urging another war, a preemptive attack on another country, without significant international assistance, and when he would believe that if a misimpression was created

by the American public, it could lead to the wrong conclusion, did this President come forward and say the truth, which was there may have been some contacts, some discussions, between al Qaeda and Saddam Hussein's agents, they were way back in 1994, there was no active collaboration that took place, but I want to make sure the American people understand this one central tenet, because I want to make sure there is no confusion here: As far as we know, Saddam Hussein was not behind the attacks on September 11, and I do not want anybody starting a war based on this false impression.

Did the President of the United States ever level with the American people and say that? No, he did not. This was an impression that he knew he was creating. If the Members would go see the movie the "Flim-Flam Man," starring George C. Scott, it was about a great guy who understood how to create impressions to get people to take action. And there was an impression created that Iraq was responsible for the deaths of over 2,000 Americans. And it is most unfortunate.

The reason we have come here tonight is to talk about the fact that it is unhealthy for a democracy, for a President to create false impressions that end in war, and this President created two massive false impressions. One that this demonic monster, Saddam Hussein, who we all agree on a bipartisan basis is a demonic monster, had weapons of mass destruction and that we were threatened with a mushroom cloud; and the second, he allowed 69 percent of the Americans to believe that Saddam was the one who attacked us, and that is an undemocratic action, and it is wrong, and he ought to be held accountable for it.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Mr. Speaker, if I could, because I want to respond to my friend from Indiana, because I know that he holds in high regard David Kay, who was selected by the administration to go to Iraq and review the various assertions and the concerns that they had about weapons of mass destruction as well as a relationship between Saddam Hussein and al Qaeda, and this is a statement that appeared today in fact in The Boston Globe and it quotes David Kay: "'At various times al Qaeda people came through Baghdad and in some cases resided there,' said David Kay, former head of the CIA's Iraq survey group, which searched for Iraqi weapons of mass destruction and links to terrorism, 'but we simply did not find any evidence of extensive links with al Qaeda or, for that matter, any real links at all.' "

He was referencing the statement by the Vice President. Again, "CHENEY's speech is evidence-free," Kay said. "It is an assertion, but does not say why we should believe this now."

Mr. Speaker, I yield to my friend, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. Hoeffel).

Mr. HOEFFEL. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding.

I wanted to thank our friend from Indiana for jumping into this discussion. We have been looking for some bipartisan debate back and forth; and the gentleman, if nothing else, has the courage of his convictions; and we welcome him here tonight.

I wanted to respond to a couple things the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. Burton) said. I think he said that we were suggesting George Bush has been asleep at the switch in Iraq. That is not at all what we have been suggesting here. President Bush has been anything but asleep at the switch. He has been very aggressive regarding Iraq.

Mr. DELAHUNT. If I may reclaim my time, the reality is that this administration, a week after the inauguration, according to a very fine Republican by the name of Paul O'Neill, former Secretary of the Treasury, had an extensive discussion about Iraq at the first meeting of the National Security Council and why it should be targeted.

I have a long list of quotes from administration officials and others that were there that can provide firsthand evidence. What I found particularly disturbing, however, according to Paul O'Neill, a good, fine, conservative Republican who was the CEO of a fine American corporation called Alcoa, was that on February 27, months before 9/11, at a National Security Council meeting, there was a map laid out; and there was a discussion among the principals about how the oil fields in Iraq would be divvied up between nations and between various corporations. I commend to my friend, and I know he must have a copy of that book, it is called "The Price of Loyalty."

On page 96, I will not bore him and those who are watching us here tonight with reading it, but I believe somebody owes the American people and this Congress, Republicans and Democrats, an explanation of why months before 9/11, months before there was any discussion about weapons of mass destruction or links, if you will, between al Qaeda and Saddam Hussein, we are talking about war.

Mr. BURTON of Indiana. If the gentleman will yield briefly, Condoleezza Rice, the Vice President and a whole host of National Security Council members were at that meeting. The gentleman to whom you are referring is sour grapes because he lost his job as Secretary of the Treasury. Their interpretation and their recall of that meeting does not jibe with that at all. That is his singular opinion.

So let me just say that one person's comment at a meeting does not make it so.

Mr. DELAHUNT. I would remind my friend from Indian of the 11th amendment.

Mr. BURTON of Indiana. What is that?

Mr. DELAHUNT. That Republicans do not criticize Republicans. I will have to defend Paul O'Neill.

Mr. BURTON of Indiana. That is the gentleman's prerogative.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Again, because we have a good discussion going here tonight, I think it is important for all those that are watching, because we will chew right into our

friend's time too, I think it is important here tonight that the American people understand that this is good discourse. This is the kind of debate that this institution needs.

Despite the fact that we have disparate views and profound disagreements, the reality is that we do have mutual respect, and in the case of the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. Burton) we have affection.

Mr. ABERCROMBIE. I think the gentleman from Indiana missed that last comment. You might want to repeat it.

Mr. DELAHUNT. I am not going to repeat the praise I gave to the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. Burton). Only once he gets the kudos.

While the gentleman might disagree with Paul O'Neill, the former Secretary of the Treasury who was appointed, obviously, by this President, I wonder if he disagrees with an observation or an anecdote that was related by Bob Woodward just recently in the book that is on, I understand, the President's Web site, where, again, I am quoting from the book. I do not want in any way to infer that this is coming from me or any of my Democratic colleagues.

But in response to this desire for war against Iraq, Bob Woodward writes, "Powell thought that CHENEY had the fever. The Vice President and Wolfowitz kept looking for the connection between Hussein and September 11th. It was a separate little government that was out there. Wolfowitz, Libby, Undersecretary of Defense Douglas Feith and Feith's gestapo office, as Powell privately called it. CHENEY now had an unhealthy fixation. Nearly every conversation or reference came back to al Qaeda and trying to nail down the connection with Iraq. He would often have an obscure piece of intelligence. Powell thought that CHENEY," Powell not, not O'Neill, "took intelligence and converted uncertainty and ambiguity into fact. A conversation would suggest something might be happening, and CHENEY would convert that into a we know. Powell," not O'Neill, "Powell concluded we didn't know and no one knew."

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Hawaii (Mr. Abercrombie).

Mr. ABERCROMBIE. Mr. Speaker, I wonder if I could prevail upon my good friend, the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. Burton), who, I might say this evening is in sartorial splendor, as well as a good friend, if we might prevail upon him to maybe come back at another time when we can have a conversation on this, because it is vital to America's interests.

I know the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. Burton) has spent his entire congressional career addressing precisely that.

Mr. BURTON of Indiana. If the gentleman will yield further, I will be happy to do that, if you ever give me some macadamia nuts.

Mr. ABERCROMBIE. I will be happy to do that.

Mr. HOEFFEL. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman will yield, back to the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. Burton), I just wanted to respond finally to the gentleman's suggestion that the prior administration, the Clinton administration, had not done enough after several acts of terror against this country.

The act of terror on 9/11 did change the thinking of a lot of people. But if you will recall, in August of 1998, President Clinton did order cruise missile strikes in Sudan as a result of some of the acts of terror; and the Republican opponents in the Congress of the President at that time did not accuse him of doing too little; they accused him of doing too much. There was a great partisan uproar that President Clinton was trying to distract the public from his impeachment woes with the use of American military power.

Mr. BURTON of Indiana. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman will yield, let me just say according to most news reports that was not a factory for weapons of mass destruction, as was anticipated, it was an aspirin factory; and there was no reason for it. There were a lot of people, including the media, that thought it was a "wag the tail" type of attack.

Mr. HOEFFEL. I would say to the gentleman that the fact is the Republican opposition at that time was in full throat, and the criticism was not that he should be doing more; but that he was doing too much, in the view of his critics.

I raise the point in good faith. I was not in the Congress then, and the gentleman may or may not have been involved at that point at that time. It shows you when there is too much partisanship I think that it clouds the judgment. It probably affected President Clinton. He probably did not think he could have congressional support if he took more action at that time. I do not know.

I would suggest that there is a time when the level of partisanship can rise so high that it can cloud the judgment of the government to act in a concerted way. I do not want to see that happen.

There is a lot of frustration about Iraq and a lot of opposition to what many of us think are the deceptions and the half-truths that have been used. The gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. Delahunt) came today to try to talk about that, and I welcome the bipartisan discussion tonight; but we have got to try to get past the bipartisan anger.

Mr. ABERCROMBIE. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman will continue to yield, I think what is important here then to get across this evening is that calling people to account is what we do. The oversight function of the Congress has a long history. I can go back to the time in which some people wonder how Harry Truman got to be chosen as Vice President of the United States just prior to Franklin Roosevelt's death, before his last campaign. Of course, he had made his reputation on an oversight committee in the Senate looking into war profiteering, is what he had done, trying to hold people to account. That is what this is all about.

If someone wants to take up the position that this is a concentration on President Bush for partisan activity, he is the President. He is making the decisions, and those decisions are subject to scrutiny.

As the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. Burton) very well knows, back at the time when Mr. Clinton made decisions about Bosnia and Kosovo, I found myself in opposition to him and said so. I think at least as far as this Member is concerned, I do not have to take a back seat to anybody in trying to bring anybody to account in the executive, Democrat or Republican, if I think that is in order.

If I know my friend, the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. Burton), well, and I think I do, he does not stand for anybody telling him who should be brought to account either. He has stood up on more than one occasion, perhaps even singularly, calling for an accounting on various issues. I think that is his function and our function, and that is what this Iraq Watch is all about, I can guarantee you that. If we think somebody is doing the right thing, we are going to say so; if we think somebody is not acting necessarily in the best interests of the United States, regardless of what their motivation might be, it is up to us to say so and engage in a dialogue to try to illuminate where the interests of the American people are.

I know that the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. Burton) agrees with that, and I look forward to any discussion we might have in the future along those lines.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Mr. Speaker, reclaiming my time, I think it is important to note that. Again, I am not sure about whether it was an aspirin factory, but I think what is really important is the point that the gentleman from Hawaii (Mr. Abercrombie) just made about oversight.

It is clear that there are no weapons of mass destruction. It is clear that the kind of relationship that has been suggested by the administration, particularly the Vice President and the President, does not exist. It is, I dare say, hurting our credibility.

We come to this as Americans. You know that, I know that, and we all know that. And this information comes from a variety of sources, whether it be from Bob Woodward, who describes a conversation that Secretary Powell has, or whether it is Paul O'Neill.

In the case of Richard Clarke, the terrorist chief, in the aftermath of 9/11, he writes in his book he expected the administration to focus its military response on Osama bin Laden and al Qaeda. He says he was surprised that the talk quickly turned to Iraq. "Rumsfeld was saying that we needed to bomb Iraq," Clark said, "and we all said no, no. Al Qaeda is in Afghanistan. We need to bomb Afghanistan. And Rumsfeld said, there aren't any good targets in Afghanistan, and there are a lot of good targets in Iraq.

"Well, there are a lot of good targets in lots of places, but Iraq had nothing to do with 9/11. Initially I thought when he said there are not enough targets in Afghanistan, I

thought he was joking. They wanted to believe there was a connection, but the CIA was sitting at that particular meeting, and the FBI was sitting there, and I was sitting there, and we looked at the issue for years, and we reached a conclusion that there was no connection."

The point is, let it go. To follow the admonition of David Kay, it is time to acknowledge our mistakes as a Nation and to begin to restore some of our credibility internationally.

I yield to the gentleman from Washington (Mr. Inslee).

Mr. INSLEE. Mr. Speaker, I would like to make a comment. I want to pose a important question to the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. Burton) if he could help us out.

My comment is on the difference between connection and action and collaboration. I do not think there is any question that there had been some communication between al-Qaeda and some Iraqi officials. I think we all agree on that, and have for a long period of time. The September 11 Commission reported that back in 1994, bin Laden had essentially asked for help from Iraq but Iraq said no deal. We are not going to help you.

And from that, the September 11 Commission concluded, a bipartisan commission concluded there had been no collaboration and there had been no active work between the two. In fact, the two highest bin Laden associates we have in custody have adamantly denied that any ties existed between al-Qaeda and Iraq.

I think an accurate picture that has been stated is that there were some contacts and that bin Laden had asked for help and Iraq had refused to give him help. And yet the President started this war. Now, the question I have is what was the President trying to do in this conversation with the American people? It appears to me that he was trying to create an impression in the American people that Iraq was behind the attack of September 11. Let me give you just one quote that fits into that impression. On September 14, 2003, Vice President Cheney said "If we are successful in Iraq, then we will have struck a major blow right at the heart of the base, if you will, the geographic base of the terrorists who have had us under assault now for many years, but most especially on 9/11."

That is just one of hundreds of statements made by this administration that to me was responsible for creating an impression in at least 69 percent of the American people that Iraq was behind it and that this was pay-back time. In fact, I remember seeing a tank as it entered Baghdad with it was lettered on the side "pay back time." And I can understand why soldiers felt that way if the President of the United States was creating an impression that Iraq was responsible for September 11.

It was not an impression that led this country to war that bin Laden had asked for help, but Iraq had said no, that is not the salient feature that led to this war. What led to this war was the President succeeding in creating an impression in America that Iraq was behind this venous and evil attack against us on September 11.

So the question to the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. Burton) if I can ask him, just kind of two questions, does he share my view that probably a majority of Americans had the impression as the result of its Federal Government's dissemination of information, the administration, that Iraq was behind in some fashion, or associated with the attack on September 11?

And if that is true, does he think the President of the United States did enough to be candid with the American people to tell the American people that no, we do not have any evidence of collaboration resulting in the attack of September 11. Sincere question.

Mr. BURTON of Indiana. Mr. Speaker, the fact of the matter is the President went to war with Iraq because of two reasons: One, weapons of mass destruction; and two, the threat to security in the Middle East and the United States of America, and because there were indications of a connection between al-Qaeda and Saddam Hussein. And there is documentation even stated in the 9/11 Commission report or in the 9/11 Commission statement.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Mr. Speaker, reclaiming my time, if one reviews the 9/11 report, they are very clear that there were more connections, more connections between Lebanon, between Iran and al-Qaeda than there ever were between Saddam Hussein and al-Qaeda. Al-Qaeda, in fact, Osama bin Laden, in 1990 right after the invasion of Kuwait, went to Saudi Arabia and met with Prince Sultan, who was the defense minister and said that we have to do something about that secularist. Let us join forces and destroy Saddam Hussein. He considered Saddam Hussein as an apostate, a corrupter of Islam.

The point is, and again, another report that came out today, Chairman Kean, again suggests that the connections between Pakistan, between Iran and Hezbollah, far exceeded the connections between Saddam Hussein and al-Qaeda. There was no collaborative relationship. We continued to hear about al-Qaeda bases in Iraq. They were in northern Iraq under the protection of the no-fly zone.

Mr. ABERCROMBIE. Mr. Speaker, would the gentleman yield?

All this points up to the fact that this is ideologically driven. This has nothing to do with those facts. This is ideologically driven by people who are generally termed neoconservative. I am the conservative here. And my colleague should be the conservative here. He is conservative. It is the conservative position not to get trapped in these foreign conflicts, not to go off charging around the world to try and do these things.

The ideology behind this is that Iraq was the key to being able to move into Syria, being able to move into Iran, that this is somehow a defense of the Likud version of what is in Israel's interest. The so-called neoconservatives that are behind this ideological thrust have wanted this war for years. It is not hidden. It is not a conspiracy. It is not some kind of subterfuge. It is an announced policy and possession philosophically they have had for years.

The sad part is after Mr. Bush became President, was appointed President, they came into the forefront in terms of their appointments in the Defense Department where they were able to bring their philosophy forward. That is what is driving this. That is what the President has to face up to. This is where his difficulty is.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Mr. Speaker, I know we have very limited time left. But I think before we go we should wish a happy birthday to our friend and colleague from Indiana (Mr. Burton), because it is his 45th birthday today, is that correct?

Mr. BURTON of Indiana. 29.

Mr. DELAHUNT. 29th birthday today, I think this has been a very good discussion. We really do welcome this conversation with my colleague. He knows we have respect.

Mr. BURTON of Indiana. Mr. Speaker, I hope we have more of these.

Mr. DELAHUNT. I hope we do, too. I would issue a challenge to my friend because he and I have traveled together and it is an experience, and it is a very positive experience, but there are people that are in the custody of the executive branch, those so-called senior intelligence Iraqi agents, that continually deny any knowledge whatsoever of Iraq or meeting the gentleman that allegedly met with Mohammed Atta in Prague in the Czech Republic, is in our custody.

Let us challenge together the executive branch and my colleague, myself, and anyone else who wishes to join us, go together and exercise the oversight responsibility and function of this Congress and interview Mr. Al-Ani and make that decision ourselves and come back and report to the American people.