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## *House of Representatives*

### **Iraq Watch The Ties That Bind June 22, 2004**

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. Gerlach). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 2003, the gentleman from Washington (Mr. Inslee) is recognized for 60 minutes.

Mr. INSLEE. Mr. Speaker, we come tonight again, the group that is styled the Iraq Watch, or a group of my colleagues and myself who are committed to continue to bring accountability to this administration's policies in Iraq, to fulfill Congress' oversight responsibility to not allow administration mistakes in Iraq to go unheeded and have no accountability for them; and we are here tonight, and I expect the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. Delahunt) and others will join me in this discussion.

We have been doing this now for several months; and tonight, as on many nights, I have great sadness walking over here to speak this evening. Just as I was leaving my apartment, I saw on the news that we have lost two more great American warriors in the service of their country in Iraq, and I do not know who these gallant Americans were. I do not know where they are from. I do not know what happened to end their lives in Iraq, but I do know this: those two proud and honorable Americans deserved a President of the United States who told the truth to the American people before he started this war that resulted in the tragedy of these two people losing their lives.

I know that this Congress has a solemn obligation to hold this administration accountable if, in fact, it is true that this administration did not tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth to the American people before this war started; and tonight, if we seem a bit angry about this situation, it is because on our minds and on our hearts are the death of these two American soldiers and those who have gone before and those who will come after.

Our duty, as we see it tonight, is to discuss the manifold failure of this administration to, one, tell the truth in Iraq; and, two, to pursue a policy that would reduce the danger to our service personnel serving in Iraq, and our discussion will proceed on those lines.

Now, let me start, if I can, on this fundamental question: Did the President of the United States of America fully level with the American people before he started this war? That is the question. If the answer is no, we think that is one of the greatest assaults to democracy that could possibly happen.

There are many things that can go wrong in a democracy, but I would assert that the most serious affront to democratic principles of a representative government is for the elected leadership to start a war based on false information. Nothing, nothing can be a more serious breach of the solemn obligations when one takes the oath of office than to start a war based on falsehood, and we are here tonight to answer the question of whether or not that occurred.

So let me start at the beginning of the Iraq war. The President of the United States asserted that America should start this war in Iraq based on two fundamental pillars, and his entire rationale for this war was based on these two pillars. He was successful in convincing a large majority of the American people that those two pillars were both factual, and those two pillars were these two:

Number one, the President asserted that Iraq possessed wholesale amounts of weapons of mass destruction which presented a threat to the United States of America and our personal and our family's security. He told the American people that time after time after time. This statement was false. This fundamental pillar of this war was false.

This President told us and stood right behind me and told the American people that we had information, the British had information that, in fact, Iraq had obtained yellow cake to extract uranium from it to build a nuclear weapon. That statement was false; and most importantly, the White House knew it was false. The White House had been told it was false. The White House had sent an emissary to Africa to check the accuracy of this statement, and Ambassador Joe Wilson who served proudly, who the first President Bush described as a hero during the first Persian Gulf War, came back and told the White House this statement was false. Two soldiers died today in Iraq based on a falsehood that was given to the American people that the White House knew was false. This pillar did not stand.

The President of the United States told us that Iraq had drones that could fly across the Atlantic, apparently, and spray Americans with biological and chemical weapons, and this scared the living pants off people in America who heard this, as it should have, and as the White House knew that it would. Unfortunately, now that reports are peeled away, we have found out that even our own Air Force told the White House this statement was false; that they were kind of balsam wood things meant to take pictures of troop movements and the like.

So the first pillar upon which the President of the United States sent soldiers to their death was false. So let us examine the second pillar, if I can, for a moment, and then I will yield to the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. Delahunt).

The second pillar upon which the President's scaffolding of falsehood was built was a clear assertion that led to a significant majority, seven out of 10 Americans, to believe that Iraq was associated, was behind the attack on this country of September 11, and the President was successful, again, in creating this impression. He was successful in convincing seven out of 10 Americans that Saddam Hussein was behind these heinous, vile, indeed evil, attacks on America of 9/11. But it was not true. It was not true.

Now, we know it was not true because a bipartisan commission has come back and stated categorically there is no credible evidence; and I want to read the quote to make sure I get it right: "We have no credible evidence that Iraq and al Qaeda cooperated on attacks against the United States."

Yet, seven out of 10 Americans were convinced by this White House that Saddam Hussein was behind these attacks on America. Where did Americans get that misimpression? Did they get it from Dan Rather? Did they get it from the New York Times? Did they get it from the Shopping Channel? No. They got it from the President of the United States, who led these people to believe that Iraq was behind this attack and that these folks were in an alliance with Iraq who attacked us.

Let us look at what the President said. The President is saying, well, no, I did not really mean to say that. Golly gee, I did not mean to suggest or lead anybody to believe that Saddam was evil enough to have attacked us actually or that he was an ally. I just sort of suggested they talked to one another at some period of time. Well, look at what the President said in fact.

In fact, the President, while he was on the deck of the aircraft carrier Abraham Lincoln, declaring the mission accomplished, several hundred dead Americans ago, he said the defeated Hussein was "an ally of al Qaeda." An ally of al Qaeda. Is the President now to have us believe that he said that Saddam was an ally of al Qaeda, but he did not mean to suggest they actually helped each other? Is that what he expects us to believe? That is very difficult to swallow.

The Secretary of State Colin Powell told the United Nations that al Qaeda was operating inside of Iraq, inside of Iraq. It turns out we find out "inside of Iraq" means they were in the Kurdish-controlled area that was inside our no fly zone. Now, are we supposed to know that?

Mr. DELAHUNT. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield.

Mr. INSLEE. I yield to the gentleman from Massachusetts.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Mr. Speaker, can I interrupt, because I think that is very important because that has been an assertion that I think is extremely misleading to the American people.

My colleague referenced the no fly zone; yet I imagine that there are many of our colleagues on both sides of the aisle and a number of Americans that are watching this conversation tonight that we are having and if you hear it without understanding some of the nuances, you hear al Qaeda was in Iraq, but as that famous radio commentator, I think his name was Paul Harvey, said, there is another half of that story.

Yes, there was a group that had some nebulous link to al Qaeda, and they were in Iraq; but they were not in Iraq in the part that Saddam Hussein had sway over. They were not in the part of Iraq where Saddam Hussein had influence. They were not in the part of Iraq that Saddam Hussein had any control. They were in the part of Iraq, as my colleague mentioned, in the so-called Kurdish area up in these mountains.

There was a group of some 200 or 300, and they were not directly linked to al Qaeda; but, yes, they were a terrorist group and one that we should not in any way countenance. They were a threat, if you will, to people of goodwill all over this world; but they were not a part or had any relationship, collaborative or otherwise, with Saddam Hussein.

And yet again and again, this White House continues to talk about al Qaeda and Iraq, but what they do not say is that it was a group that was in Iraq that was outside of the influence of Saddam Hussein. It was in, as indicated, in the so-called no-fly zone. Saddam Hussein did not dare enter that zone.

Mr. INSLEE. And yet the President of the United States just left out that little fact that they were in the part of Iraq that Saddam did not control when he discussed this issue.

Now, this omission has led many people to be very concerned, even those who have supported President Bush. I note this editorial in the Dallas Morning News of June 22, 2004. This is a newspaper that supported President Bush's election. In fact, they noted that in this editorial, and they have listened to the administration's response to the 9/11 Commission. They have listened to this sort of excuse-making that has come out of the White House to try to excuse this. But look what the Dallas Morning News, a newspaper that has supported President Bush, said.

It said, ``U.S. troops have found no Iraqi weapons of mass destruction, and the 9/11 panel says there was no working partnership between al Qaeda and Saddam Hussein. President Bush presented both WMD and the al Qaeda-Hussein link as reasons for striking Iraq before it attacks us.

``The President has a credibility gap here, and he needs to address it right away. Vice President DICK CHENEY tried but failed miserably. He said, in effect, `we know more than you and you better trust us.' ''

And then, I might have to subscribe to the Dallas Morning News, because I think in the next paragraph they hit the nail on the head. "The country did just that when we went to the war in Iraq, but things aren't working as promised. The administration needs to respond with specifics, not like members of a secret society with keys to the kingdom."

But the unfortunate truth is there really is nothing the administration can now say to excuse the fact that they gave us false information to start the war.

Let me note just one other quote. Vice President Cheney, who is now saying we did not really intend to imply that there was a working relationship between al Qaeda and Iraq, we did not mean to say that, but what did Vice President Cheney say before the war started? He said on Meet the Press that by attacking Iraq, "We will have struck a major blow right at the heart of the base, if you will, the geographic base of the terrorists who had us under assault now for years, but most especially on 9/11."

Now, obviously the vice president was trying to create an impression that we were going to be striking back at the people who struck us on September 11. That is the obvious implication of his language. I do not think he was simply trying to point out that Iraq is in the Middle East. I do not think it was a geographic lesson he was trying to give us. He was trying to build support for a war that was based on two huge falsehoods, one falsehood about weapons of mass destruction and another about this alleged working relationship between Iraq and al Qaeda.

Now, there are connections between Iraq and al Qaeda. They both have "Q" in their names, but the 9/11 Commission concluded there was no working relationship between these two groups.

Let me mention one thing, and I will yield to the gentleman from Ohio. In fact, what the 9/11 Commission, again, a bipartisan commission, chaired by the former New Jersey governor, Republican governor, bipartisan group, what they concluded was that years back, back in 1994, Osama bin Laden had, in fact, asked Iraq for help but had been rejected.

Now, that may be a contact, but it is not a basis for a war, and it is most unfortunate now that even today this White House will not come clean about their manifest falsehoods that they gave us. And until they do, we will be here blowing the whistle on these falsehoods.

Mr. STRICKLAND. I would just say to my friend from Washington State, why is this important? And the American people may be asking why we stand here and talk about the decisions in the past that led to this war, and I would just simply say it is important, because we have lost somewhere in the vicinity of 850 precious American lives. We have well over 4,000 precious American soldiers who have been terribly wounded. Many of them have lost their arms and their legs and their sight, and they have been damaged for the rest of their lives. That is why it is important.

And it is important, because the same people, the same people who took us into this war based, as was said, on false assumptions and false premises are the same people who are still in charge and who are making decisions for what is happening right now and want to be in power to make decisions about what happens next year and the year after that and the year after that. That is why it is important for the American people to understand what has happened, because we need a change of leadership.

Before I yield to my friend from Massachusetts, just let me say this. There may be people who observe this debate and feel somehow disconnected from this war. They may have no one fighting in Iraq that they love or are related to or even know, but if they have got children, if there are parents watching who have 13, 14, 15, 17-year-old sons and daughters, they ought to pay attention to this debate, because we have stretched our military so thin, and that is why we are extending the months of service for our National Guardspersons and our Reserve persons.

We do not have the capacity, in my judgment, to really respond to something if it happens in Iran, or in North Korea. What are we going to do? I will tell you what we are going to do if this administration gets another term. We are going to have to impose a military draft. If we impose a military draft, the next time there are not going to be the exceptions that many of us had available to us in years past. There will not be exceptions for educational studies, I do not believe, something that I took advantage of and that Vice President DICK CHENEY took advantage of.

So the parents in this country need to be watching this debate. If they have got children and they do not want their sons and daughters to be subject to a military draft, then they ought to be involved and engaged in what is happening in the United States of America today, because our military is stretched thin. We do need more troops in Iraq, as General Shinseki warned us many, many months ago, before he was pushed aside and mocked, and quite frankly, made fun of and ridiculed by the Vice President and others in this administration.

That is why I have constituents, we all have constituents, who have been pulled from their communities, separated from their families, sent to Iraq, expecting to be there for a limited, set period of months. And now what are they being told? They are being told, we have got a stop loss policy in place. You cannot even leave to return home or to leave the service when your contractual obligation is up, because we simply do not have a sufficient number of men and women in our Armed Forces. That is the sad truth that we face as we debate this tonight.

Mr. INSLEE. Let me suggest, and the gentleman brings up a very important point, it has been called a stop loss order, but it really is a start the draft order. This is a silent draft. These people are being drafted into service they did not sign up for. They signed up for a definite term and they are now being drafted. They happen to be in Iraq right now, but we are already seeing the implications of the policy as the gentleman has addressed. It comes back and again the Dallas Morning News called it the Iraq Trust Gap, this is the

President and his neocon colleagues who were telling us that this war would be simple, we would be welcomed with rose petals, our people would be home in a reasonable period of time, it would not stress our military, we only needed 100,000 troops, there would not be massive looting after we had this amount, there would not be casualties after a period of time, the mission was accomplished back in May 2003.

All of these things are appropriately creating a trust gap not only for the President, but for the United States.

Mr. STRICKLAND. I want to read another paragraph or two from the Dallas Morning News. This is no left-wing newspaper. This is the Dallas Morning News, a major newspaper in the President's home State. They said at the beginning of their editorial:

A time comes in most administrations when supporters tell the President he has a problem. Bob Dole told Ronald Reagan that he should worry about the deficit. Tip O'Neill told Jimmy Carter that he had better improve his icy relationship with Capitol Hill. And George W. Bush told his father that White House chief of staff John Sununu needed to go.

The supporters find themselves like skunks at the garden party. They back the President but see a problem. And they decide to speak out.

We find ourselves in that position with President Bush and the war in Iraq. We supported the President when he ran for office. We backed the war in Iraq. But now we wonder, what happened?"

What happened is this, that the American people and this Congress were given information that was false and we were encouraged to believe something that was not true. There is no evidence that Saddam Hussein, as bad as he was, as evil and despicable as he was, had anything to do with the attack upon the United States of America. And the American people needed to know that before our sons and daughters were sent to war in Iraq. It is true that Osama bin Laden was responsible. It is true the Taliban were responsible. That is why every Member of this Chamber, save one, supported our decision to go to war in Afghanistan.

We supported the overthrow of the Taliban. Many of us have been calling for months for an increased effort to find, apprehend or kill Osama bin Laden. He was the one who orchestrated the attack upon this country, and tonight he is roaming free somewhere on the face of this earth planning the next attack. Can we imagine that if we had taken the resources and put the effort into finding Osama bin Laden that we have invested in Iraq, do any of us believe that we would not have found this man and have put him out of business?

I think it is beyond question that if we had put the resources into finding Osama bin Laden and fighting al Qaeda, we would not be worrying tonight about what that man may

be planning in terms of the next attack upon our Nation. But we did not do that. We diverted resources to Iraq and consequently the real enemy, the real threat to our country, is roaming free this very night.

Mr. INSLEE. I have got to add just one more thing before I go to the gentleman from Massachusetts. Another thing the administration did in not finding Osama bin Laden, in not cutting off the head of al Qaeda, I got a letter today, because I was trying to investigate, I asked the Department of Treasury, is it true that the administration 2 days after September 11, allowed a chartered jet airplane to fly around America picking up Osama bin Laden's relatives and flying them out of the country before they were fully interrogated and debriefed about the potential relationship with Osama and al Qaeda and over 100 Saudi citizens where now we know the attack emanated from? They answered, yes, that is true. Our administration, when no one else could fly in America, people were stranded here, had to drive across America to get home from Washington, D.C., but while you had to drive home from Washington, D.C., the President of the United States, the administration, told all the Saudi Arabians, we will let you fly, without even talking to the CIA or the Department of Treasury to find out if they were associated with this.

They said, indeed, that was true. I asked them, why is that? They frankly could not give me an answer. That is just one problem we have got.

I yield to the gentleman from Massachusetts.

Mr. DELAHUNT. I would like to submit that the real danger here is because of this diversion which is a military intervention, a war on Iraq that it subverts, detracts from the real war that threatens the American people.

The war by fundamental Islamist terrorists that, because of our intervention in Iraq, are every day spawning new groups and new terrorists. The policy of this administration in terms of the so-called war on terror is creating, I would submit, a situation where if it continues, yes, we have won the war in Iraq, but we will lose the war on terror. It is very important that the American people, those that are watching our conversation here tonight, understand that there is a profound distinction between this adventure in Iraq for reasons that at some point in time we should really get into: Why did we end up going to Iraq? Well, we know this from people within the administration, far in advance of September 11, the day of our national tragedy, plans for war against Iraq were being designed.

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

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

Mr. STRICKLAND. Mr. Speaker, former Governor Kean, the Chair of the 9/11 Commission, a Republican, a highly respected Republican ex-Governor, has said, and he said it over the weekend, I heard him, that there were many more reasons to believe there was a connection between al Qaeda and Iran.



Mr. DELAHUNT. Why did we not go into Iran? Why?

Mr. STRICKLAND. Mr. Speaker, that is a question that needs to be explored. And, quite frankly, now we know that Iran apparently is going to pursue their nuclear capabilities. And what are we going to do about it? What are we going to do about it? With 135,000 troops bogged down in Iraq, how can we pose a credible threat to Iran to try to get them not to pursue nuclear capabilities?

I think we have overextended ourselves, we are exhausting our troops, and we are putting ourselves in great jeopardy as a Nation. And our national security is in jeopardy, I believe, because we have overextended ourselves; we have miscalculated in Iraq. And we will find ourselves hard pressed to meet a threat anywhere else on Earth if we were in need of a significant number of troops anywhere else. And I think that is a serious problem that this entire Chamber should be addressing.

Mr. INSLEE. Mr. Speaker, if I may, I would like to attempt to answer the question why we are in Iraq rather than Iran, and the answer is because we have an administration who is willing to follow their ideology rather than the evidence. They are willing to say things as long as it is consistent with their ideological beliefs even if it is inconsistent with the facts as given to them by our intelligence agents.

Let me give an example. The Vice President now for 2 years has just kept spouting this statement that the reason we should invade Iraq is because there was a meeting, one of the reasons, because there was a meeting between Mohammed Atta and an Iraqi intelligence person in Prague.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Mr. Speaker, Mohammed Atta, by the way, for those who are watching us, was the leader of the 19 hijackers that were responsible for our national day of tragedy.

Mr. INSLEE. Mr. Speaker, so he has been saying this over and over again in city and town and "Meet the Press" and who knows where else. And what did the bipartisan commission conclude about this key of his whole argument that Saddam Hussein had a working alliance with al Qaeda? They concluded: "We have examined the allegation that Atta met with an Iraqi intelligence officer in Prague on April 9. Based on the evidence available, including investigations by Czech and U.S. authorities, plus detainee reporting, we do not believe that such a meeting" occurred.

So despite the best intelligence of the United States of America, the Vice President is willing to continue to spout something that is false, according to our best intelligence, in order to back up this ideological fixation of invading Iraq. That is why we are in this war, because we have an administration willing to do that.

Mr. STRICKLAND. Mr. Speaker, let me say this, if I may. Some people think if you repeat something often enough even if it is not true, people will come to believe that it is true.

Mr. DELAHUNT. It is called the big lie theory.

Mr. STRICKLAND. The big lie theory. And the fact is that this is being repeated over and over and over in the face of evidence of this bipartisan commission that it is simply not true. Why would a member of this administration continue to say something to the American people that is not true?

Mr. DELAHUNT. Mr. Speaker, if I can interrupt, and we are joined by the gentleman from Hawaii (Mr. Abercrombie).

We all remember, of course, that it was again this White House that assigned a former United Nations inspector to go and search for the weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. His name is David Kay. He is universally described as someone of great integrity, of great expertise. He does his job, and he comes back and he claims that we were all wrong. That is months ago. This particular cover of Newsweek is dated February of this year. We were all wrong. There were no weapons of mass destruction. There were no links to al Qaeda and Saddam Hussein. And yet he is befuddled and disturbed by the fact that this President and this Vice President will not own up to the fact. He was interviewed by a British newspaper, and his recommendation to President Bush and particularly Vice President Cheney, because if there is anyone who has pushed this particular adventure, it is the Vice President of the United States, RICHARD CHENEY. Let us just put it out here tonight. And I am quoting him, assigned by this White House, presumably a Republican, a hawk on the war, he says, "It is about confronting and coming clean with the American people, not just slipping a phrase into the State of the Union speech. He should say we were mistaken and I am determined to find out why." And they will not let go. They will not let go.

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

Mr. ABERCROMBIE. Mr. Speaker, I think the hearing that we had in the Committee on Armed Services today makes clear that they have moved from that position to the point that it does not matter. That is essentially the point that Mr. Wolfowitz was taking today, the Deputy Secretary of Defense, Mr. Paul Wolfowitz, who is one of the individuals that has been cited here and has been involved in the decisionmaking based on this false intelligence.

Mr. STRICKLAND. Mr. Speaker, would the gentleman let me say a word about Mr. Wolfowitz, since he brought up his name? He is, in fact, one of the architects of this war, as we know. He is the Deputy Secretary of Defense. And I was appalled a few weeks ago when he was asked how many American soldiers we had lost in Iraq, and this man who pursued this war and who is the Deputy Secretary of Defense did not know. He implied that there may be about 500 who had been killed. At that time there had been 721. Every

morning when Mr. Wolfowitz wakes up, he ought to be thinking about the soldiers who have been lost over there. And I am sorry I interrupted my friend.

Mr. INSLEE. Mr. Speaker, I want to make sure the good gentleman from Hawaii can share some wisdom.

Mr. ABERCROMBIE. Mr. Speaker, it is not interference at all, believe me, because this is complementary to what has been said. I can tell the gentleman on April 20 of this year, he is thinking about an army. Here is what he said to the Committee on Armed Services, Mr. Wolfowitz said, on April 20: "There is no question it would be nice right now to have a larger army." These are the same people that were claiming, and reclaimed again today, that General Shinseki was wrong. He did not mention General Shinseki, but he went out of his way to make sure that everybody understood that we did not need a greater Armed Forces even though he said so; it would be nice to have a larger Army but absent that, after all, we can on the 200,000 security forces that he says are now in place.

I have his testimony here before me, a written statement given today before the Committee on Armed Services in which he indicates on Page 3 that we are going to be full partners with the Iraqis. This has to do with the sovereignty issue, that they are going to take the lead, he says elsewhere, that they have 200,000 Iraqis in a security force that is a "work in progress," an interesting way of looking at it, that according to the Prime Minister, as related by Mr. Wolfowitz, they are ready to take charge on July 1. There has been enormous progress.

So I asked him today, well, is there an end in sight? And there is no end in sight. It is schizophrenic. I pointed that out to him today. On the one hand, everything is fine, everything is working according to plan, maybe a little bit behind schedule, but nonetheless working its way right along; and on the other hand, we are going to have to be there forever as some kind of partner. I asked partners, I understand the word "partner" and the phrase "full partner." What does it mean in terms of who is in charge in relation to these young and men as well as some older members of the Guard and Reserves who are being killed and wounded? Who is in charge? I cannot get from General Pace, I cannot get from Secretary Wolfowitz, who is in charge. Who makes the decisions? They are talking about a partnership on all levels, regional, national, and local; a unity of command; a consensus on the way ahead. And it is supposed to be working out of what are called joint operating centers. How these joint operating centers are supposed to make any decisions regionally or locally or nationally is beyond me.

What is clear from the testimony today is all the discussion that has been taking place about the reasons for going to this war have been entirely set aside; and now apparently what the mission of the United States is, is to act as some kind of backup force, according to them: "U.S. forces are there to help out. They are backup." That is the motto, a backup force for whatever is to take place now to achieve some kind of nation-building. That is now what our mission is all about. It has nothing to do with weapons of mass destruction. It has nothing to do with anything else that was used as a reference point for why we are going to war, an immediate threat to the United

States in terms of weapons of mass destruction, some kind of military connection to terrorist organizations that are an immediate threat to the United States.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Mr. Speaker, when are they going to go and fight the war on terror and absolutely defeat terrorism?

Mr. ABERCROMBIE. Mr. Speaker, I will answer the gentleman; but according to Mr. Wolfowitz today, terror is now being defined as the insurgency in Iraq. If there was not anything before, we have now created it as a result of the actions that we took based on this false information.

So now the situation has been redefined. The war on terror has been redefined to be the activities of what are termed killers and terrorists and all kinds of anecdotal references as to what that means. We have to go no further than what happened today, an assassination in Mosul of the head of a law school and her husband being beheaded, killed with her and beheaded; another American soldier dying; roadside bombings, all the rest of these kinds of activities taking place so that what was going to happen, in my judgment, on July 1 is that the American military will be set adrift in a desert sea with no compass, with no direction, with nothing except to provide backup under this full partnership in these so-called joint operating centers to make decisions about what we are going to do with the military in Iraq. I was unable to determine today from Mr. Wolfowitz exactly what the role of the Guard and Reserve forces and what the deployment schedule are going to be.

I asked, is there an end in sight? I got Korea, 50 years. I got Germany as an answer. I got Bosnia as an answer. I said, if that is the case, if you are going to cite Bosnia, which he does over and over again, in Bosnia there has been a steady drawdown of troops. Times and schedules are announced. Troops have been drawn down. If we are talking about Korea or Germany, none of the conditions prevail in South Korea or Germany that prevail in Iraq today. So, the analogies are at best totally inaccurate and have nothing to do with what is taking place today in Iraq.

The question remains, if the reasons for going to war have now proven to be at best inadequate, and, at worst, false and misleading, and deliberately so in order to fulfill whatever ideological agenda was then in place in the Bush administration, the fact is now that the mission of the United States military is to somehow provide a backdrop, a foundation or background to this increasingly apparent civil war that is now underway in Iraq.

Mr. DELAHUNT. If the gentleman will yield, can I ask a very brief question? What did he say about the terrorist cells that now exist in Iran, in Syria, in Pakistan, in Sudan, in Indonesia, and I could list a long litany of other terrorist cells that are a threat to the United States? What did he say, if anything; or is he just simply focused on Iraq?

Mr. ABERCROMBIE. Because the question arose in several contexts, including questions and observations made by the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. Weldon) and others on the Republican side of the committee. We try very hard in that committee to

work together as Americans to try to come to these conclusions. The gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. Weldon) raised the issue of Iran. Other issues were raised with regard to Iran and Syria with the border police.

The best that I can discern out of all of this is that somehow this war was to prevent this from taking place, that is to say, the increased terrorist activities to the degree it can be associated with reference to Syria or Iran, but I was unable to get out of his answers anything that would indicate how could we deal with it.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Have the terrorists left Iran and Syria and Sudan? What is he saying?

Mr. INSLEE. Mr. Speaker, reclaiming my time, let me make a suggestion. There might be a reason the gentleman from Hawaii (Mr. Abercrombie) might have trouble understanding Mr. Wolfowitz.

Mr. ABERCROMBIE. I do not have trouble understanding him.

Mr. INSLEE. Or accepting his explanation, is I suspect the gentleman from Hawaii (Mr. Abercrombie) does not share Mr. Wolfowitz's belief that it does not matter that this war was started, based and started on a falsehood. I suspect the gentleman from Hawaii (Mr. Abercrombie) agrees with me that when you look in the eyes of a young widow, as I have, who lost their husband as a result of this multitude of falsehoods by this administration, it matters a whole heck of a lot. And this administration is now trying to demean and belittle the fact that they started a war based on falsehood, and they think that Americans are just going to forget it, and somehow we are supposed to forget the incompetence, the rank incompetence, the multitude of tactical, logistical, strategic mistakes they made time after time, of total ignorance about the cultural situation in Iraq, about the looting we knew was going to happen, and somehow we are supposed to forgive and forget that.

Mr. ABERCROMBIE. If the gentleman will yield, I will tell you exactly what Mr. Wolfowitz thinks on that subject. In the New York Times Magazine, interviewed by Bill Keller in September of 2002, a year after the 9/11 activity, I will tell you exactly what he said.

“There is an awful lot we don't know, an awful lot we may never know, and we have got to think differently about standards of proof here. In fact, there is no way you can prove that something is going to happen 3 years from now or 6 years from now. But these people have made absolutely clear what their intentions are, and we know a lot about their capabilities. Intentions and capabilities are the way you think about warfare. Proof beyond a reasonable doubt is the way you think about law enforcement. And I think we are much closer to being in a state of war than being in a judicial proceeding.”

That should give you a very brief summary of the answer that would be forthcoming to the questions you just raised, namely, it does not matter.

Mr. INSLEE. Reclaiming my time, I may note that the people who are responsible for the mistake of not putting enough troops in Iraq to quell the looting that was sure to occur, the people who made the mistakes about assessing the threat level posed by Iraq, the people who did not provide body armor to our soldiers when they went to war without adequate flak jackets, the people who sent our soldiers into the streets of Baghdad in canvas-lined Humvees instead of armored personnel carriers, who ignored the fact that we were going to need to protect our soldiers against these improvised explosive devices, the people who have made all of these mistakes are still the people in charge of our policy in Iraq. Not one person in the civilian hierarchy of the Bush administration who is responsible for these massive foul-ups that have cost hundreds of lives has lost their job or a day's vacation as a result of these foul-ups.

Mr. STRICKLAND. If the gentleman will yield, I think the reason they have not lost their jobs is because these decisions were made at the very highest levels of this administration. I do not think we can blame the lowly bureaucrats. I think the people in the highest positions of decision making in this administration are responsible. So, are they going to fire themselves? Probably not.

Mr. INSLEE. Of course, I am referring to the Secretary of Defense, who is the primary architect for this, and Mr. Wolfowitz, who is an architect of this. These are the decisionmakers that should be held accountable for these foul-ups. I hope the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. Strickland) agrees with me.

Mr. STRICKLAND. Yes, I agree.

Now, if I can just make an observation: I think the American people would accept from this administration, from the President, a statement that things have not gone just the way they hoped they would go; that perhaps mistakes have been made.

What I think the American people will not accept is a continuation of a failed policy that grows out of an unwillingness or an inability to accept responsibility for mistakes, to admit those mistakes, and to change course.

Quite frankly, I believe it takes strength and courage to admit a mistake. What I see from this administration is a stubbornness and an arrogance that is unwilling to admit even one mistake.

My friend mentions sending our troops into Iraq without body armor. The war started in March of 2003. It was March 2004, March of this year, before all of our troops were provided with body armor. I ask, how many troops were unnecessarily wounded and how many lost their lives simply because of the incompetence of those at the Pentagon who sent them into battle without this protection?

Right tonight, as the gentleman from Hawaii (Mr. Abercrombie), the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. Delahunt), my friend the gentleman from Washington (Mr. Inslee)

and myself stand here in this Chamber, there are soldiers driving around in Baghdad and in other cities in Iraq who are using Humvees that are not armored Humvees, and many of them are being injured by driving over roadside bombs, and, because those Humvees are not armored, they are being seriously wounded and in some cases losing their lives. Somebody ought to be held accountable for that.

If we are going to send our troops into battle, the very least we can do as a government is to make sure that everything we can do to give them adequate equipment and proper protection is done. For us not to do that is shameful.

Mr. DELAHUNT. That goes back to the issue of competence, and that is where, in addition to the issue of credibility, this administration, this White House, has failed miserably.

Mr. ABERCROMBIE. Can the gentleman yield, so I can tell him what Mr. Wolfowitz would respond, or how he responded today to the questions the gentleman is raising, and particularly what Mr. Inslee has cited in detail. I quote from page 8 of his written statement given to the Committee on Armed Services today.

“Although the reconstruction plans first envisioned in the summer of 2002 and submitted by the Coalition Provisional Authority to Congress last July have undergone substantial changes, it has been the coalition's ability to adapt to rapidly changing circumstances that has brought us now to the transfer of sovereignty and the beginning of representative government in Iraq.”

Mr. DELAHUNT. If the gentleman will yield, can the gentleman tell me and tell those that might be watching our conversation tonight, what has been the cost, not in terms of the lives of our children, but what has been the cost to the American taxpayers for this adventure?

Mr. ABERCROMBIE. The commitment is upwards of \$150 billion. That does not include the taxes that are now being imposed, and I use that with quotation marks around it because that is how it is characterized, within the military itself.

The existing military budget is being taxed, money extracted from it for operational purposes. The capacity to expend construction funds of \$18 billion-plus are committed, but are not necessarily expended just yet. The plain fact is we are talking between \$150 billion and \$200 billion.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Already to date it has cost the American taxpayers \$200 billion to build roads in Iraq, to provide Iraqis with good health care, to clean up their environment and to stimulate their economy.

Mr. INSLEE. Reclaiming my time, there is an element of this expenditure that is grossly wrong, and that is the most polite sense I can say it. The General Accounting Office, the nonpartisan group that basically looks at the financial system of the country,

concludes that the United States misspent, meaning this administration, misspent at least \$1 billion in Iraq in the Iraq war to date, and that was as of June 16. They made reference to multiple cases of the Halliburton Corporation misspending millions of dollars of taxpayer money.

Let me give you one very small example of how Halliburton Corporation misspent taxpayer money. Halliburton, of course, is the company that got a sole source provider bid; a company that the vice president just recently has been CEO of, they did not send it out to bid to any other corporations, gave a special deal to Halliburton, and look what Halliburton did with your money.

Before the war, a Kuwaiti firm had the contract to provide meals to troops at four bases in Kuwait. Just before the fighting started, and this is from the General Accounting Office, not some leftist group saying this, just before the fighting started, the Pentagon turned the job over to Halliburton subsidiary KBR, Kellogg Brown and Root. As part of the switch, the costs went up from \$3 a meal to \$5 a meal, for the cost, from \$3 to \$5.

So, here is just one small example that happened thousands of times where the American taxpayers got gouged \$1 billion, much of which went to the Halliburton company on a sole source contract.

If this does not smell like a mackerel in the moonlight, I do not know what does.

Mr. STRICKLAND. If the gentleman will yield further, can I say something? I know our time is coming to an end, but the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. Delahunt) talked about building roads and bridges and hospitals and schools in Iraq, neglecting our own domestic needs. If I can quickly share an example of how this administration seems to prefer Iraqis over Americans.

As we all have heard, Secretary Rumsfeld wants to compensate the Iraqi prisoners who were abused in the Abu Ghraib prison. I do not have any problem with that. But I do have a problem with this: Seventeen American POWs that were tortured in that same prison, they were tortured with electricity, they were threatened with castration, they were threatened with suicide, their bones were broken, they went to court and sued Saddam Hussein and the Iraqi regime and a court gave them compensation. This administration appealed that decision, fought the American POWs, and a newspaper in my region read like this. They said it was the United States of America and Saddam Hussein versus American POWs, and the United States and Saddam Hussein won.

What is good for the goose is good for the gander. If Secretary Rumsfeld wants to compensate the Iraqi prisoners, the American ex-POWs deserve equal compensation.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Mr. Speaker, we know, we know what the commander of the VFW, the Veterans of Foreign Wars, a highly-esteemed organization serving veterans in this country, had to say about this administration's submission of a veterans budget to the



United States Congress. That commander called it a sham and a fraud. So this is not inconsistent.

If I could just leave my colleagues with one question. We have talked about we could not find the weapons of mass destruction. We cannot find the links, if you will, of the collaborative relationship between Saddam Hussein and al Qaeda.

Has anyone looked for the plans that were crafted by Saddam Hussein that indicated that he was prepared to attack the United States?

Mr. INSLEE. Well, yes. In fact, we have spent millions of dollars of taxpayers' money looking for that, but they apparently do not exist.

Now, let me suggest one thing that the President of the United States could have done to help his fellow Americans when we made a decision whether or not to go to war. He could have leveled with the American people. He could have told the American people that to the best of our knowledge there is no credible evidence that Saddam Hussein was responsible for the heinous, evil attack on America of September 11. He has talked to the American people probably six times a day for the last 2 years, and this President has never said that. This is wrong. We intend to maintain accountability for this administration.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleagues for joining me tonight for the Iraq Watch, which will continue on other nights