

that it ought to all go for the common good, that everything ought to be thrown into one pot and everybody shares equally. If you believe in the socialistic type of government, then you can justify a death tax. But if you believe in the democratic, capitalistic process which has made this country, by the way, the greatest country in the history of the world, there is no way under any circumstances that you could justify this tax.

As I said earlier, last week we voted, it is over on the other side now, we voted for permanent elimination of that tax, of that death tax. Unfortunately, most of the Democrats once again have chosen to support and to continue the death tax.

It is time for the American public, Mr. Speaker, to understand why there is a difference between Republicans and Democrats. There is one issue I feel very deeply about in my heart that separates our two parties. Granted, about 40 of the more conservative Democrats did vote to eliminate the death tax and for that they deserve credit. But when I am out there, I do not feel like I am getting in a partisan argument, I do not feel like I am taking any cheap spots when I point out that the death tax is primarily supported by the Democrats and the elimination of the death tax is driven by the Republicans. When you go out to the heartland of America, when you go out there into that countryside some time, see if you have got enough guts to look that farm family in the face and say to them, it is because of you that the next generation in that family will in all likelihood not be able to continue the farming or ranching operation.

I urge my colleagues and I urge especially my Democratic colleagues, it is time for you to surrender this issue, because it is the right thing to do. It is time for you Democrats to step up to the plate and support the American farmer and the American rancher and the American small business. The best way that you can do that is to vote to eliminate the death tax. Give these families, give these farms, give these small businesses, give these ranches an opportunity to go to the next generation. We all benefit. Our communities benefit. Our environment benefits. Push the socialistic temptation aside and adopt, rather, what I call the fairness doctrine. It is very simple, just be fair. If you could just be fair in your assessment of this horrible tax, you too next time will join the Republicans and vote against the continuation of the death tax.

IRAQ AND WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION

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

Mr. HOEFFEL. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to address the

House with a number of my colleagues who will be joining me later, notably the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. DELAHUNT) and the gentleman from Hawaii (Mr. ABERCROMBIE), to talk about Iraq.

Mr. Speaker, we have had a great military victory in Iraq. Our young men and women performed with great courage and great effectiveness. We are all very proud of our military and the fact that the threat of the Saddam Hussein regime is no longer present to threaten regional and world peace. But we have two questions that we believe need to be addressed: First, is our military mission complete in Iraq? Secondly, having won the military victory, are we winning the peace?

Regarding the military mission, I would suggest to the House that our mission is not complete without a full accounting of the weapons of mass destruction. There is no question that the primary purpose for invading Iraq put forward by the administration last year and accepted by a majority of the Members of Congress, myself included, was for the purpose of disarming Saddam Hussein of weapons of mass destruction. There is no question that Hussein had such weapons in the past. The international United Nations inspectors were finding them in the mid and late 1990s. Hussein used weapons of mass destruction, notably chemical weapons, against his own citizens with devastating and brutal effects. No one has dreamt up or made up the motion that Hussein had in the past weapons of mass destruction. There is no doubt that he did. But we cannot find them now. We do not know where they are. Perhaps they are buried in the desert and we will find them next week. I hope that is the case. Perhaps he gave them to some other group or some other country. Perhaps he destroyed them. We do not know what happened, but many of us in the House believe that we must have a full accounting of what happened to the weapons of mass destruction before our military mission is complete, for two basic reasons. First off, we need to know where they are. If they are not in Iraq and have been given or taken someplace else, we need to secure them, to dismantle them. We need to know who has the custody of them.

□ 2300

If they are in Iraq, we have to find them. We have to make sure that the coalition forces gain custody of those weapons of mass destruction and not another group that might use them for evil purposes. If these weapons have been destroyed, all for the better; but we need to know why our intelligence did not know that fact. We frankly need to know what happened to them so that we could be sure that the world has been rid of that particular group of weapons of mass destruction and that, if they do exist, they are in safe custody.

The second reason that we need a full accounting of the weapons of mass de-

struction is to determine what has happened regarding our intelligence and the political use of that intelligence by the Bush administration in the arguments to support war in Iraq. There is no question that the Bush administration and the leading senior advisors to the President stated with complete certainty in the fall of 2002 that Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction, was developing more weapons of mass destruction, and posed an imminent threat to the region and, in fact, to the world. In private briefings and in public statements, the President of the United States and his senior advisors assured Members of Congress and the American people that the weapons of mass destruction existed, that they were being developed in even greater numbers, and that they posed an imminent threat. And many of us, myself included, based our vote in favor of military action against Iraq for the primary purpose of disarming Saddam Hussein of weapons of mass destruction. Now we cannot find them.

More troubling, now stories are appearing in the press and intelligence analysts are stepping forward, only on the record if they have retired, off the record if they still are at work for the United States, saying, in fact, they were not giving such certain advice to the White House in the fall of 2002, that they were saying we cannot be sure what kinds of weapons of mass destruction Saddam Hussein had in the fall of 2002.

On September 26, 2002, the President made a speech in the Rose Garden stating with great certainty that Saddam Hussein had chemical and biological weapons of mass destruction and was developing additional chemical and biological weapons of mass destruction, and yet at the same time it now has become public. The Defense Intelligence Agency in September, 2002, was circulating a report through the White House in the highest levels of the administration saying "there was no credible evidence that Saddam Hussein currently had weapons of mass destruction or was developing more weapons of mass destruction." There was some evidence, but no credible evidence that that was a certainty. And that lack of certainty did not make its way into the public and private arguments made by the administration. So many of us feel that the Bush administration has a growing credibility gap regarding the weapons of mass destruction.

Why does this matter? It matters greatly for the President's new doctrine of preemption, of the preemptive use of military power to stop an enemy. I do believe in an age of terror when we are dealing with adversaries that do not always come from another country who do not always have a capital city to defend or a homeland to defend when we are dealing with terrorists who are not only faceless but stateless that it may be necessary to take preemptive military action if we are faced with an imminent threat to

this country. But that presupposes that we have accurate intelligence. It is one thing to respond to an attack against us. That is the way America has always gone to war once we have been attacked, and it is easy, of course, in the traditional sense of warfare to see an armada massing in the bay or an army building on our borders to know that an attack is imminent.

In an age of terror, we will not always have that warning; so preemptive action may be wise and necessary in the future, but we must have accurate intelligence. We must be able to depend upon that intelligence. We must be able to depend upon the intelligence analysts bringing the information forward in a timely fashion, giving their best advice to the President and the White House, and then we have to depend upon the President and the White House using that information appropriately and wisely, using it to inform Congress and the American people, not to mislead Congress and the American people.

We do not know at this point what exactly happened regarding our intelligence. We do not know whether it was misused by anyone intentionally or unintentionally. We do not know whether the White House heard what it wanted to hear in these intelligence briefings. We do not know whether the intelligence briefings told the White House what the briefers thought the White House wanted to hear, nor do we know whether Congress was told what people only wanted us to know or perhaps what they thought they wanted us to know.

But these questions have to be answered because it goes to the very root of our democratic system, our checks and balances, the proper relationship between the executive and the legislative branches and whether or not we can have faith in the accuracy of our national intelligence agencies and in the proper use of that intelligence.

Before I go any further, we have been joined by the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. DELAHUNT), a senior member of the House Committee on International Relations and an eloquent spokesman on foreign policy and national security, my good friend; and I yield to him.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. HOEFFEL) for again coming to the floor of this House to raise this issue to the American people because clearly our credibility is at risk; and as time passes, there is a growing crescendo of constituents of mine, of his, and of others of our colleagues inquiring as to what occurred in this particular case.

I think what I find particularly disturbing is that in the State of the Union Address by the President back on January 28, he referred to an African nation. That nation, it was subsequently revealed, is the nation of Niger and that there had been a series of letters exchanged between officials of

that nation and the Saddam Hussein regime in Iraq relative to the desire of Saddam Hussein to purchase highly enriched uranium from that nation; and that was referenced in the State of the Union Address, as I indicated, by the President of the United States. In fact, it was one of the core ingredients in terms of the Administration's presentation to the American people for its rationale in launching military intervention into Iraq.

Now subsequently it has been revealed that that information was false and that those documents that were relied on by the President, by the White House were, in fact, false. They were forgeries. And that was known to our intelligence agencies, specifically the CIA. Now there appears to be disagreement between the CIA and the Administration as to the information that was brought to the White House by the CIA.

Mr. HOEFFEL. Mr. Speaker, is the gentleman aware that according to reports, the CIA informed the White House of the lack of accuracy of these reports in March of 2002, a full 10 months before the President's State of the Union Address this past January?

□ 2310

Mr. DELAHUNT. Yes, I am aware of that, and I am also aware of newspaper reports that indicated that there was nothing special, according to the National Security Adviser, about this particular information, and that they just simply did not inquire any further from the CIA as to the reliability of that particular information.

But what I find disturbing, I say to the gentleman, is that a week from that date, the Secretary of State, Colin Powell, presented the administration's case before the United Nations Security Council. And according, again, to newspaper reports, that information was omitted by the Secretary of State because he felt that that information was inaccurate.

Now, something is wrong. If, in the space of 7 days, through a vetting process at the Department of State by Secretary Powell, he made the decision to remove that key piece of evidence from his presentation to the Security Council, then something is remiss, something very, very serious.

Now, I know that the gentleman supported the resolution. I happened to vote against that resolution. We all had our own reasons. But even those who disagree on the issue as to whether there should have been military intervention in Iraq have an obligation, I would submit, to conduct a full and thorough review of what occurred and why this particular intelligence was referred to by the President of the United States as he addressed the American people, and clearly influenced the American people. And I would hope, and we understand that our intelligence committees on both the House and the Senate side, are conducting an investigation because of the concerns

not only with this piece of information, but other pieces of information that were relied on or alluded to that supported the claim of the administration as to the intent and the position of weapons of mass destruction by Saddam Hussein.

But I would respectfully suggest that that is inadequate. I think we have to be candid that this is a political institution, the American people are represented by two major political parties, and I dare say that if there is disagreement within the intelligence committees of the House and the Senate, and if that disagreement should break along party lines, there will be accusations that the Republicans were stonewalling, or that the Democrats were seeking political advantage in an effort to embarrass the President. And I do not think the American people deserve that. I genuinely believe that this is a nonpartisan issue. This is an issue about America. This is an issue about democracy. This is an issue that has, I would suggest, consequences far into the future about America's image in the rest of the world.

I would hope that this body and that the President would consider convening an independent commission; take the politics out of this so there will not be any finger-pointing, and bring people on board that have reputations for probity, for integrity, and are eminently qualified to address these issues. We should take it away from this body, take it away from the Senate, so that it is not about politics.

Mr. Speaker, we have already had that experience. The Hart-Rudman Commission that none of us really knew about or thought about or gave special attention to until September 12, the day after. Because that particular commission was comprised of eminent Americans from different fields, all highly regarded, people whose integrity are not in question; people who had no political axe to grind, who did this country a great service and produced a document that predicted, that predicted September 11. They warned that the United States was at risk. That particular document was filed on February 25 of 2001. And tragically, tragically, it sat on a shelf and no one paid any attention to it. Mr. Speaker, I would think that given the work of that particular commission, some of those people might very well agree to serve their country again. Because we have this, as the gentleman describes it, growing credibility gap.

It is important to note that the CIA, again, according to newspaper reports, is in serious disagreement with the White House and the President. According to a Washington Post article that appeared on June 12, the story quoted a senior CIA analyst that this case, and it is referring to the evidence developed regarding the alleged, the alleged purchase of uranium from the country of Niger that proved to be false, a senior CIA analyst said that this case, and I am quoting his words

now, "This case is indicative of larger problems involving the intelligence about Iraq's alleged chemical, biological, and nuclear weapons and its links to al Qaeda," which the administration cited, as we well know, as justification for war. Information not consistent, and this is a senior Central Intelligence Agency analyst who said this: "Information not consistent with the administration's agenda was discarded, and information that was consistent was not, was not seriously scrutinized."

We do not know what the proof is, and that is our obligation. That is why we are here. We have a responsibility to seek the truth, to answer questions. Not for political gain, not to embarrass anyone, but to reassure the American people that the integrity and the professionalism of their intelligence services is not questioned.

Mr. HOEFFEL. Mr. Speaker, let me ask the gentleman a question along this line of the growing credibility gap. I am sure the gentleman has heard about the two supposedly mobile labs that have been found in Iraq after the conflict. I wonder if the gentleman saw the news today about what appears to have been their actual use.

Mr. DELAHUNT. No, I have not, but I am eagerly awaiting to learn.

Mr. HOEFFEL. Mr. Speaker, the latest is that reports are now circulating that instead of being used for biological or chemical laboratories, these two trucks were used to make hydrogen for the purpose of filling up the Iraqi weather balloons needed by Iraqi artillery and used by all artilleries to gauge wind and currents and so forth to make their artillery shooting accurate. It appears that the loose canvas covering on these trucks would not be conducive to their use as chemical or biological laboratories and that the equipment there is probably designed for hydrogen production.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman would yield, I think it is important for us to be very clear and state that just recently, and I believe it was in Philadelphia, a city with which the gentleman is familiar, the President, once more, stated unequivocally that they will find the weapons of mass destruction. So I will accept the word of the President of the United States.

But this goes beyond just that question, because it is clear that up to this point in time, there have been no discoveries about weapons of mass destruction. It just has not happened.

But this is about integrity. This is about whether information was used in a way so that the American people were misled, or this was information that was given to the President of the United States, that was inaccurate and led him to come to the floor of this House, deliver the State of the Union address to the American people, and tell something and suggest to them something that in fact had not happened.

So again, I would hope that we would get the politics out of this process and

seek to establish an independent commission, one of prominent Americans, that would take up this burden, and it is a burden, because it would be again calling on them to serve their country as they did so well when they told us: beware, America is at risk of an attack, a serious attack, that could cause a substantial loss of life by terrorists and no one was listening.

□ 2320

Mr. HOEFFEL. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for his comments and particularly for his suggestion. I think it is a very good one.

There is no doubt that we need an independent and nonpolitical review of the performance of our intelligence agencies and the use to which that intelligence was put. And I think an independent commission such as the gentleman describes is an excellent idea and one that I would certainly support.

We have been joined by our colleague, the gentleman from Hawaii (Mr. ABERCROMBIE), who was a passionate advocate on matters of national security and foreign policy; and I am happy to yield such time to the gentleman from Hawaii.

Mr. ABERCROMBIE. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman very much.

In conjunction with the comments that the gentleman and the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. DELAHUNT) have been making, I want to preface my remarks with the observation that part of the complaint that is being made across the country with respect to this attack on Iraq and the subsequent war which is now unfolding is that where are people speaking out on it?

Well, we are here on Special Orders tonight. I think those who are observing our deliberations here on C-SPAN understand that the House is not formally meeting right now. I would think, I want to make it clear to those folks who are observing and listening to our deliberations here this evening, that we do not have the opportunity during the work day to be able to speak at length and in depth on this issue and the issues surrounding the attack on Iraq. We have the opportunities to ask questions and perhaps a followup or two in committee hearings, when we are able to get them, with respect to the defense budget or as we dealt with just recently having witnesses from the Department of Defense. Those are rather formal occasions, as they should be. Presentation is made by the Department of Defense or by the requisite executive agency, and so occasionally a dialogue back and forth.

If C-SPAN is not there, for all intents and purposes, it does not exist. When we go home to our districts and they say, where are the people who are opposed to this or have differing views or want to establish a different perspective, it is important to understand that the mass media in this country is owned by a small number of conglomerate

interests, many of whom are associated with the kind of thing that is taking place just today.

I refer you to the Los Angeles Times, Monday, June 23, the business section: California firms lining up to capitalize on rebuilding of Iraq. Hundreds of millions if not billions of dollars involved in this opportunity. If you think for a moment that the national media is going to be covering the Special Orders, do you think we are going to appear even on "Nightline," which is probably the most objective and the most far-reaching of those who want to get the news out, I think we are dreaming.

Now, I look up right now and the galleries are right in front of us. For those of you who are across the country who are observing us and listening to us tonight, the galleries are empty. I suppose the news organizations might have to pay overtime, I am not sure, but there are no reporters volunteering their time because they are interested in what it is that we have to say.

Now, I have come back from a trip with a congressional delegation, the first congressional delegation to get into Iraq, to go to Bagdad, to go to Kirkuk in the north, a bipartisan delegation; and I am referring to the gentleman from Pennsylvania's (Mr. HOEFFEL) admonition and to the gentleman from Massachusetts' (Mr. DELAHUNT) suggestion about an independent commission to examine these issues, a nonpolitical review, if I remember what you said.

Mr. DELAHUNT. If my friend from Hawaii would yield, I think again one cannot overemphasize the need for the information to get out to the American people because it is important to know that the investigations that will be conducted in this House by the Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence in the other body will be conducted behind closed doors, and what we are looking for is to take the politics out of it.

Now, I hear some say that Democrats are raising these issues to embarrass the President. No one can gauge our sincerity, but I know that the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. HOEFFEL) and many of us on both sides of the aisle, by the way, Republicans and Democrats, want a situation that does not lead to a political competition.

Here I just ran across a report from The New York Times dated June 18. And let me again quote: "Despite growing questions about whether the White House exaggerated the evidence about Saddam Hussein's chemical and biological weapons, President Bush and his aids believe that the relief that Americans feel about Mr. Hussein's fall in Iraq will overwhelm any questions about the case the administration built against him. Administration officials and Republican strategists say, 'I think we can ride this out,' said an official."

This is not a question of riding something out. This is a question of righting a wrong. A wrong, wherever the responsibility should fall, let the American people in an appropriate forum listen to the questions, listen to the evidence and form their own judgments. This is not about politics.

I do not know if either one of the gentleman had the opportunity to see the British Parliament in its inquiry into these issues. I found it extraordinary. It was carried on BBC. It was televised during the day. It received national attention there. And two former ministers of the Blair government who had resigned because they did not believe that the intelligence was accurate and was sufficient, they testified as to their observations. It was civil. It was respectful. It was a debate that I know has informed the British people.

□ 2330

We need that to happen here, but given the realities of our own political system, I think it is best if the President, the leadership of both branches, agree for an independent commission to have public hearings that are transparent, much like the Blair government has conducted in the United Kingdom.

Naturally, we are not going to expose sources, but I would like to know, for example, what happened between January 28 and February 5. On January 28, the President of the United States in his State of the Union address made this assertion, and on February 5, according to newspaper reports, the Secretary of State Colin Powell had that particular piece of evidence removed from his presentation to the United Nations Security Council. What happened during those 7 days?

The American people should have an answer.

Mr. ABERCROMBIE. Mr. Speaker, I think that that is what fits into the premise that I am establishing here, that we need to have the press in that gallery paying attention to what is going on here on the floor because this is the only place right now that such a commission is going to take place.

If someone wants to attribute partisan motives to what we are saying down here, they are going to do that anyway. I have to trust, as we all have to trust, that the people will make a decision as to whether what we are saying, why we are saying it, how we are saying it, where we are going, makes sense to them or not on the basis of ideology alone, as opposed to trying to get at what the truth of the situation is with respect to the national security interests of this Nation.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Mr. Speaker, I think what the American people have to understand is that we are not making allegations. We are not making assertions. We are asking for a process that will reassure the American people.

Others are making allegations, others like a gentleman who recently re-

tired after 25 years in the State Department, the last four of which were in the Bureau of Intelligence, and his name is Greg Fieldman, 25-year veteran, and this is what he said, and I do not know what his political affiliation is. He could be a Republican for all I know. The al Qaeda connection and the nuclear weapons issues were the only ones that you could link Iraq to an imminent security threat to the United States, and the administration was grossly distorting the intelligence on both items.

That is his words. That is not my colleague's words, the gentleman from Pennsylvania's (Mr. HOEFFEL) words or my words or Democrat words in a partisan context. I want to hear from him, and the American people have a right to hear from him, and I am sure my colleagues on the other side of the aisle would expect to hear from him, also. I would hope that this idea is seriously considered by both sides.

Mr. ABERCROMBIE. Mr. Speaker, on that point, or on these series of points that are being made, for all intents and purposes, the only opportunity that the American people are going to have to have these questions explicated is on this floor during special orders, and I want to indicate, and I believe the three of us are agreed upon this, we are going to be back. Arnold Schwarzenegger is not the only one that is going to be back.

We are going to be back here on this floor. We are going to be asking the questions. We are going to be making the observations. We are going to be putting forward for the American people the opportunity to hear a perspective that is not necessarily or likely to be enunciated in the press, most particularly in the controlled press. We are not going to see this on the evening news. We are not going to see this in the so-called Sunday talk shows. They have the usual suspects on generally when that comes about.

So what I want to do this evening by way of establishing some of the premise is refer back again to the congressional delegation that we made May 23 through the 27 under the chairmanship of the gentleman from California (Mr. HUNTER), my good friend, our good friend, our able chairman, someone dedicated to the defense of this country by any standard of measure.

Of course, there are differences of opinion that we have in the Committee on Armed Services on which I am happy to be serving as to what the policies might or might not be with respect to the defense of the strategic interests of this Nation, but there is no difference between us on either our desire or our capabilities or our abilities to try to discern what the best course might be. That is precisely why we went. We did not go there to try and get into a contest with anybody on an ideological basis or party basis but rather to try to find out what was taking place.

Maybe tonight will be the first time people will be able to hear anything about what was known as the Organization for Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance, which has now become the Coalition Provisional Authority. These are important because we started out one way with a former general, Jay Garner, who has now been removed all of the sudden within almost days, weeks, in terms of workdays, just days, has been removed, and why? Not because General Garner was thought to be a bad person or an inadequate administrator or did not have the proper motivation or understanding, but because the mission to which he had been assigned and the mission which he expected to carry out, namely, a reconstruction effort, somewhat perhaps akin to the aftermath of a natural disaster, a dam bursting or a hurricane or typhoon or something of that nature, turned out to be a typhoon of entirely a different kind, namely, that there was chaos; that there was an inability to provide even the most elemental of protection for those who would be doing the reconstruction; that there was not an understanding and foundation in the population in which this reconstruction was supposed to take place that this was a mutually agreed-upon activity.

There were forces in the street that were, in fact, trying already to get the United States out of Iraq, and therefore, we had to have the intervention of a very competent and highly professional diplomat, Mr. Bremer, Mr. Paul Bremer, who came in and assumed the authority over what has become the Coalition Provisional Authority. What did he propose?

When we went to Baghdad to talk with him, he had put together what I called an outline. Some people would call this a plan, but I think Mr. Bremer is an honest and forthright person. I was very impressed with his desire to speak directly to us on the questions that we posed and the observations that we made. He did not try to finesse anything. He did not try to make anything into something other than what he thought it was. He gave that clear impression, and I think that was agreed upon by all Members there, Democrats and Republicans, who were there.

He came up with what could best be characterized as an outline, not a plan. A plan is something that we know how to implement, we know who is going to implement it, we know where it is going to be done. We did not know any of these things. We still do not know these things. We are making it up as we go along. This is not an accusation, as the gentleman indicates, against Mr. Bremer. On the contrary he is trying to put something together that was not planned for.

This is one of the key elements that we have to think about here when we are talking about we can have authority as General Shinseki said when he retired as Army Chief of Staff on June

11, you can be assigned command authority but you have to earn leadership.

The question here that has to be answered by the President, by the Department of Defense, by Mr. Rumsfeld and others is, are they really exercising the kind of leadership that we need in these circumstances? We cannot equate a political policy with patriotism. If you are trying to tell me, and this is where I draw the line here, if you are trying to tell me that I have to agree with somebody else's political policy or have my patriotism questioned or have my capacity to understand what the strategic interests of this Nation are, then you have crossed over the line, and what you are saying in effect is do not examine closely, do not analyze to any great degree the policies that I am putting forward because if you do then I will equate that with somehow being antipatriotic or against our troops.

If we are putting the lives of young men and women and the United States Armed Forces on the line, then we have to have policies that are worthy of the commitment and dedication and professionalism of those young people.

I got into electoral politics because we failed to do that in the Vietnam War because we decided then that we would equate military activity with political policy, and the military activity became the political policy. That is why we got to body counts in Vietnam to try and justify our insistence on being there militarily, and so we have to account for the key tasks to be completed here in the context of does this advance the interests of the United States at this juncture, pending some further inquiry as to how we got there in the first place.

□ 2340

And I will tell you that while these, in and of themselves, these 10 points of Ambassador Bremer to be completed, are worthy in and of themselves, they do not answer the question about what will be the role of the United States over the next 5 to 10 years, at least a decade.

And this is where General Shinseki's words become ringing in terms of his retirement and what he said at that retirement about command authority and earning leadership capacity. He said that there should be no confusion about the argument over what the military should be doing or not doing in this country and what its role is going to be in the post-attack phase in the context of the guerilla war that is now underway in Iraq. There should be no confusion as to the commitment of the United States military to civilian control. To raise these issues as to who was in charge is dysfunctional to the discussion. But he warned us, and these words are going to be prophetic, do not get involved in a 12-division policy with a 10-division army.

And what he was saying here is, were we adequately prepared ahead of time?

Did we do the kind of planning that was necessary in order to accomplish this task? And was that mission that was outlined adequately underlined and a foundation established that would enable us to say with authority that the interests of the United States in terms of its strategic position in the world and whether or not we were facing imminent danger was in fact at stake? Absent that, then we are in for serious trouble. Because that means we will be engaged in essentially an ad hoc operation perhaps for over a decade to come in Iraq, and we will pay a fearful price for that in the lives and bloodshed of our American military and upon the taxpayers of this country and upon the credibility of the United States with regard to world opinion.

Mr. HOEFFEL. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman would yield, his comments about Vietnam, I think, are very telling and warrant some consideration. One of my great concerns before the military involvement in Iraq started was not whether we would win that military confrontation. That was never in doubt. But how we would act afterwards and would we be perceived in perception or reality as a colonial power, an occupying power, or one that was there to liberate and help Iraqis gain control of their own lives.

Now, I have noticed that the United States asked the United Nations to name us and the British occupying powers, using that phrase in the U.N. resolution of a week or two ago, occupying powers, which seems to me to be sending the wrong signal to the rest of the world about what our role in Iraq should be. And the gentleman's comments about Vietnam, what I most recall about our quagmire in Vietnam was how poorly our Presidents explained the Vietnam policy to the American people.

Mr. ABERCROMBIE. Whether they were Democrat or Republican.

Mr. HOEFFEL. Absolutely right. And the great failing I see now is the inability of the current President to explain the costs, the challenges, and the time lines facing us as occupying powers, if you will, in Iraq.

The gentleman was there. I would be fascinated to hear his response based upon his firsthand observation.

Mr. ABERCROMBIE. Well, Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman will yield to me on that point, Ambassador Bremer was very, very direct in his characterization of us being an occupying power. And this was not said with any kind of bravado. It was simply an announcement of the realities that were involved and what his obligations were and what his responsibilities were in Iraq as the director of the coalition provisional authority.

And we ought to get something straight here about this. When we say coalition, we are talking about the United States of America. That is who is in charge here. When the Americans show up, then people mean business. I remember that from the Balkan situa-

tion before. And just by way of disclosure, on that I opposed President Clinton on that. So again I point out this has nothing to do with Democrats and Republicans, whether they are in the Presidency or not. This has to do with credibility in terms of whether or not the national interests are involved and to what degree they are involved. As a result, I think that we need to understand very clearly what Ambassador Bremer's dilemma is and what is he to do at this stage when contemplating how to advance civil society.

Now let us talk about the practical consequences of this. There is a reason that young men and women are being killed or wounded almost daily in Iraq today. We have no civil authority in place. When those who criticize those of us who were aware of this attack taking place under the terms and conditions and time that it took place, when they complain about, well, are you now ready to admit that you lost; that somehow we won and you thought we were going to lose. As my colleague from Pennsylvania pointed out, I do not know of anyone, certainly not any responsible person in the Congress, and I cannot think of anybody in the Committee on Armed Services that thought for a moment that the United States military would not succeed. We only have to observe them in action, as we have as recently on this trip at the end of May, to see that the professionalism, the capacity, the capabilities of the United States military is unparalleled.

That is not the question. The question is are the politicians and the politics behind the military activity up to the mark. That is what is at stake here. And that is why we have the situation in which these young people are being shot, are being wounded, are being put in harm's way every day. There is no civil authority there. We are trying to stand up a police force.

Does that sound familiar? It should, because we have been trying to do it since the late 1990s in the Balkans; and we are still, despite much more favorable circumstances in, at best, a very tentative dilemma with respect to whether or not with the NATO troops and United States troops leaving that area, whether or not chaos will descend once again. I will assure my colleagues if we leave any time soon, there will be chaos of a nature that the Secretary of Defense calls untidy.

Mr. HOEFFEL. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman, and I would yield to my colleague from Massachusetts.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to add one observation. The gentleman mentioned the Balkans. What is transpiring today in Afghanistan is close to a disaster, and here again we have young Americans at risk every day. There has been an unfavorable review of what is occurring within Afghanistan. The warlords are still there. The Taliban are reconstituting themselves. The president, who had the support and continues to have the support of the United States, President

Karzai, is fearful of leaving Kabul. Again, progress has not been measured, but rather the lack of progress is obvious; and we have been there 18 months.

Earlier, my colleague referred to General Shinseki. He had the courage to speak his mind. He had the courage to tell the American people. And by the way, I think we all agree, I think there is unanimity among us that Iraq and the world is better off without Saddam Hussein. That is not at issue here. We have had a changing policy in regard to Iraq dating back for years, including, by the way, in the 1980s, when this President's father, George Herbert Walker Bush, took Saddam Hussein off the terrorist list as Vice President in the early 1980s, in conjunction with, and, obviously, under the direction of President Reagan, installed an embassy in Baghdad, supplied agricultural credits in the amounts of billions of dollars to the Iraqis, and were providing intelligence from our military to the Iraqi military in terms of benefiting in their war with Iran.

I think we have to say it, they were fully aware that the Iraqis at that point in time were using chemical weapons. They knew. They knew what was happening in northern Iraq against the Kurds.

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Mr. ABERCROMBIE. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman would yield, that just goes to show that the interests of the United States at that time were deemed to be such that we could have that kind of diplomatic relationships with Saddam Hussein and the government in Iraq. The present Secretary of Defense was part of that, was in Iraq and trying to do business with Saddam Hussein.

The question is what caused that change? Was it really in the interest of the United States in terms of our defense and imminent danger to the United States to attack Iraq? That is a question that needs to be answered because it is going to inform us and instruct us where we are going from here, whether it is Iran, Syria, North Korea, whether it is the kind of policies that are going to come forward on Iraq itself. This is the kind of thing that needs not just an emphasis but needs explanation.

If we are going to have a policy worthy of the legacy of this Nation's triumph of democracy, we cannot simply assert it on behalf of other people, particularly in a place like Iraq which has never known it and whose entire history since World War I has been nothing but a division of the spoils among Western nations.

Mr. Speaker, I simply want to indicate to my colleagues, and I hope that we will have a dialogue in the future, particularly with those who have different views as to where we should be going and what we have accomplished to this point, or what we have failed to accomplish to this point, because it is the only place that the American people

are going to get any kind of a dialogue like that. That is what this House is all about. This is the people's House. You cannot appear on this floor except by way of election. You can be appointed to the United States Senate; you cannot be appointed to the House of Representatives. This is the people's House. We come up for election, as my wife says, every other year, not every 2 years. You can have a driver's license longer than you can have a license to be on this floor, and that is as it should be because it was the intention of the Founders of this Nation that the people in this country have the opportunity to decide who will represent them here against the House of Lords on the other side of the building.

I would indicate that I will be coming back to the floor, and I hope to be joined by others because we do not intend to let this issue slide. We do not intend for anybody to get over this or get by it.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Or ride it out. Mr. Speaker, nobody is going to ride it out.

Mr. ABERCROMBIE. Not while we have the opportunity and obligation as Members of the House of Representatives to speak out on behalf of the people of this Nation.

Mr. HOEFFEL. Mr. Speaker, I have been here just 5 years. I have often heard of the gentleman's eloquence and passion, and he has proven it tonight with great glory.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Mr. Speaker, let me just close with an observation. It is my understanding that sometime this week we could very well be considering a proposal for prescription drug benefits. I juxtapose that with a headline that I noticed today, and I guess it must have been in the aftermath of Under Secretary Wolfowitz's testimony before the Committee on Armed Services where it was concluded that there was a probability that a substantial American presence would be required in Iraq for a decade and that the cost to the American people would be \$54 billion a year.

I ask my colleagues and those that are watching us to reflect for a moment on the cost to the taxpayers and the reality of the deficit that we are facing far into the future and at the same time the needs of our seniors to have a genuine, significant, prescription drug benefit so they can live their lives with dignity and a sense that they are going to be treated as they should.

Mr. ABERCROMBIE. And that they are not under siege.

Mr. HOEFFEL. Mr. Speaker, the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. DELAHUNT) has framed the issue very well. There are many things we need to be talking about regarding the post-conflict situation in Iraq: how to secure it properly because security is a huge issue; and how to bring not just democracy to the people of Iraq but the institutions of democracy, free press, free speech, a noncorrupt judicial system.

The gentleman talks about the need for a full disclosure by the President of the costs of the commitment, the challenges and the time line that we face in Iraq.

As we close tonight, I cannot think of a better request we can make of the President, to tell the American people and the Congress what we will be facing in Iraq. If the people do not know, they will not support it. And if times get tough, and they have been, 17 people have died in Iraq since hostilities have supposedly ended.

Mr. DELAHUNT. The number I understand now is 43 young Americans have died since the end of the formal phase of combat.

Mr. HOEFFEL. It is staggering. We need a full description and a full setting-forth of the challenge by the President. I thank the gentleman from Hawaii (Mr. ABERCROMBIE) and the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. DELAHUNT).

Mr. ABERCROMBIE. One closing remark, I do not think the parents and families of the young people who have died make any differentiation between formal and informal. I think those deaths are devastating regardless of the timing associated with it.

CORRECTION TO THE CONGRESSIONAL RECORD OF THURSDAY, JUNE 19, 2003, AT PAGE H5643

ELECTION OF MEMBERS TO CERTAIN STANDING COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

Mr. TERRY. Mr. Speaker, I offer a resolution (H. Res. 284) and ask unanimous consent for its immediate consideration in the House.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Clerk will report the resolution.

The Clerk read as follows:

H. RES. 284

Resolved, That the following Members be and are hereby elected to the following standing committees of the House of Representatives:

Committee on Agriculture: Mr. Neugebauer.

Committee on Resources: Mr. Neugebauer.

Committee on Science: Mr. Neugebauer.

Committee on Small Business: Mr. McCotter.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Nebraska?

There was no objection.

The resolution was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid upon the table.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

By unanimous consent, leave of absence was granted to:

Mr. JEFFERSON (at the request of Ms. PELOSI) for today on account of official business.

Ms. KILPATRICK (at the request of Ms. PELOSI) for today on account of personal reasons.