

in this body and by the first President Bush who displayed leadership qualities which unfortunately seem to be missing at the White House right now.

There was a budget agreement in 1990 concluded on bipartisan terms, and then a budget passed entirely with Democratic votes in 1993; the economy responded positively to that discipline and it thrived in the 1990s, and we got out of deficit spending and ran \$400 billion in surpluses and paid off a chunk of that national debt. Just think what would be the case if we could have continued on that path.

Mr. SCOTT of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, the projection was by 2011 and 2013, we would have paid off the entire national debt and had no interest on the national debt to pay year after year.

Mr. HOLT. I seem to recall standing here on the floor with the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. SCOTT) and the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. PRICE) 3 years ago saying that the majority should not be so quick to spend this surplus. They began salivating at the sight of this projected surplus. I recall my friends here saying number one, it is projected; number two, things happen. We should not spend it all down. We should not give it all back in tax cuts; there might be some unforeseen events. Well, indeed there were. It happened on September 11; it happened with a stock market bubble popping. We were caught unprepared because the budget allowed absolutely no leeway. It was built on the most optimistic of circumstances and predictions, as well as, I would say, the greediest of ingredients.

Mr. PRICE of North Carolina. Just to add to the gentleman's thought, we got off of a disciplined path toward debt reduction. Whatever else we did in the way of new investments or tax cuts, we certainly should have reserved a certain amount of that anticipated revenue to protect Social Security in the future and to protect ourselves against exactly the kind of eventuality we are now facing.

I thank the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. SCOTT) for a helpful discussion. As we face this \$87 billion supplemental appropriations request, of course, we will do the right thing by our troops in Iraq and Afghanistan and meet our international obligations, but we will and we should ask some tough questions of this administration for an accounting of where we have been thus far and where we are going, and above all, how we are going to pay for this and how this fits in with the overall fiscal health of the country we love.

Mr. HOLT. The gentleman from Hawaii (Mr. CASE) said it very well, it would be easier for us to deal with this with the \$87 billion, with all of the economic problems facing us, if the leadership here and the leadership down the avenue would level with the American people about how this happened. I think that is what the American people ask, is that their leaders level with them and not just go on as we go fur-

ther into debt have the leadership say and now we need tax cuts more than ever. I thank the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. SCOTT) for this very useful discussion.

Mr. SCOTT of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I want to end with this chart that reminds people of the hole that we have dug ourselves into. And when people ask what is the Democratic plan, I just point to the green because that was done without any Republican assistance, and here we are right now. As we look at how dire this situation is, we have to look forward to the Social Security situation where we will not enjoy a nice surplus year after year. We are going to have a challenge of deficits in the Social Security plan that we could have covered with just what the 1 percent got in the 2001, not the 2003, not what everybody got, but the top 1 percent got in 2001 would have been more than enough to cover all of this deficit. But we have a challenge with Social Security, and we are going in the wrong direction. I thank all Members that participated tonight because we have to remind people how bad a situation it is.

□ 2230

We can change directions as we did in 1993 and go back to fiscal sanity, go back and do a surplus, pay off the national debt, or we can continue in the direction we are going now. We will make those decisions in the upcoming weeks. I thank the gentlemen for participating.

IRAQ WATCH

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. KLINE). 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 rise tonight to start another of the Iraq Watches that we have been conducting for the past 2 months or so. The first night of each week that we are in session, a group of us come to the floor to talk about Iraq, to talk about the fortunes of our fighting forces and our relief workers who are toiling in that country. We talk about the problems that we see, we suggest changes in our national policy, we ask questions of the administration and seek answers, both for the Congress and for the American people. I have been joined each week, and I will be as well tonight, by the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. DELAHUNT), the gentleman from Hawaii (Mr. ABERCROMBIE) and the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. EMANUEL). We have often been joined by other Members. We would welcome all Members of the House to participate tonight or in future Iraq Watches. Democrats and Republicans are welcome to participate during this hour of discussion.

Mr. Speaker, recently the President has sought \$87 billion for fiscal year 2004 to pay for our military operation

and reconstruction activities in Iraq. That number is larger than rumored a couple of weeks ago, caught most Members of Congress by surprise, although we knew a big request was coming certainly, on top of the \$79 billion requested and approved last April for fiscal year 2003. Many of us feel that we need more information from the administration at this point before dealing with this supplemental request for \$87 billion for activities in Iraq. No one in this Congress wants to do anything that hurts the troops in the field. Of all the things going on regarding Iraq, the diplomacy, the reconstruction, the comments about weapons of mass destruction, the comments about our allies, the activities of the Ambassador, Mr. Bremer, of all the things happening in Iraq, the only truly good thing is the behavior of the troops. Our young men and women in uniform have performed brilliantly during the period of time when active warfare was under way and during the period of time after victory was declared by the President but the guerrilla war has continued and over 100 Americans have been attacked and assassinated by those guerrilla warfare tactics in Iraq, the men and women of the Armed Services have really performed brilliantly and have done all Americans proud. So the issue is not whether we support the troops in the field. We all do. Of course we do. And we also want to make sure that we live up to our commitments, that we see this challenge through. Some of us who engage in Iraq Watch, such as myself, voted in favor of the military authority sought by the President last fall. Some of us voted no. But all of us understand, now that the military activity has occurred, we have an obligation to see this process through. We cannot cut and run. We cannot leave Iraq with no functioning government. We cannot leave a vacuum, a power vacuum that would allow the bandits and the bad guys to resume power using the weapons that they have and once again subjugate innocent Iraqi civilians. But in the face of this very large request for \$87 billion, about two-thirds of which would go to our military operations and about one-third of which would go to reconstruction costs, many of us in Congress feel that we need more information from the administration.

I would put into three categories the questions that we have and the information we are seeking: The first is simply more information on the cost of our activities, the length of time that the military operations would be expected to continue, the length of time that the reconstruction would last, accurate information regarding the whereabouts of the weapons of mass destruction, the casualty lists of American soldiers wounded and otherwise incapacitated in Iraq. We need more good information about what is happening over there, and we need the full truth about the problems and the bad information that is happening there. The administration has not been as

forthcoming as most of us would like it to be over the past 6 months. And now that an \$87 billion request has been made for the upcoming fiscal year, this is the time surely for President Bush to come clean with Congress, to level with the American people, to provide answers to these questions, to provide as much information as possible regarding not only the current activity in Iraq but what he foresees coming down the pike in terms of cost, timetable, manpower needed, resources needed, what the prospects are for being joined by allies and friends. We need more information.

Secondly, related to that but I think a second category, we need a specific plan for what will be happening in Iraq, really in two parts. One for the internationalization, if you will, of the activity there and the second half of the plan would be how to get Iraqis back in charge of Iraq. In order to internationalize the operations, we need to turn to our traditional friends and allies, to international organizations such as the United Nations, perhaps NATO, to seek their support, to seek their manpower, to seek their dollars and their resources to help rebuild Iraq, to help empower the people of that country economically and to bring a new government and a new freedom and democracy to the Iraqi people. I do not believe America should try to do that alone. I do not believe we have got the resources to adequately do that when we are facing the huge budget deficits that we already face in this country. We need our friends and allies to be involved. Of course we all remember the virtual stiff-arm that the President gave to our friends and allies in the run-up to the military activity in Iraq. There was an arrogant unilateral approach to our diplomacy, what I called at the time a cowboy diplomacy that indicated to our friends and allies that we did not need their help, that we could go it alone, that they should get out of the way, particularly the old Europe, as the Secretary of Defense characterized it, and allow us to do our thing without a lot of hassle from our pesky allies. Of course it is those "pesky allies" that we are going to now, that the President is seeking support from, that the President is hoping by going to the United Nations that he can attract into what seems to be a quagmire in Iraq.

So we need a plan here. We need more than the President saying, we're going to go to the U.N. and seek their support. We need to know how that support will be put together, how much of it we need, how much of it we have a realistic chance of securing, what it will take to get the United Nations fully engaged. It seems to me that one thing it will take is to allow the United Nations to do its job as a peacekeeper and a reconstructor and a redeveloper of nations, as a nation-builder, if you will. Because that is what the United Nations is there for, to nation-build, a concept that was disparaged by the

President when he was running for office but a concept that he now embraces, although not by name, as he is urging that America, virtually alone, undertake nation-building in Iraq. Most of us would like to see this process internationalized. We need to see a plan from the President to figure out how to do it, how long it will take and how much it will cost.

The second part of the plan we need is to determine how to get Iraqis back in charge of Iraq. It will not be easy to do that. Iraq does not have a tradition of self-government. It does not have a tradition of democracy. I believe that all people in the world are capable of self-government. I think all Members of the Congress believe that, but those that do not have a tradition of it, those that have dealt with powerful elites in their country that have abused average citizens, recognize that they need assistance. They need assistance building the institutions of liberty and democracy, institutions like a free press, institutions like a free and corruption-free court system, institutions such as a civil society, documents like a Constitution, a written Constitution that all members of a country, all groups within a country have a stake in and have a role in determining. All these things have to be accomplished in Iraq and we need to know how to do that, how to build these institutions of liberty.

We need to know a timetable: How long is it likely to take to get Iraqis back in charge of Iraq? What will it cost? How much support do we need? How much training must there be? How much do we need to expand the existing interim governing committee that has been created? Who else needs to be involved in establishing that group, to give it more credibility and a greater representation from all segments of Iraq? So we clearly need, after we get more information from the President of the United States and after he develops and gives us a plan for both the internationalization of the reconstruction and how to get Iraqis back in charge of Iraq, the third thing that we need is an exit strategy, when can we leave, how long must we stay and how much will it cost us to do the things that are needed?

As I said at the outset, all of us, whether we voted for or against the war in Iraq, understand now that we have conquered the nation. In a rather crude phrase, we now own the nation. We cannot walk away. We have a moral obligation to see this situation through, to make sure that there is a stable and representative and hopefully democratic government in Iraq before we leave or the Western powers leave. But we also need to know from the President before we vote this \$87 billion what that exit strategy is and how long he thinks it will take and what standards we want to accomplish in achieving the status that would allow us to leave. And how will we measure our progress toward that date when we

can leave? We have to know where we are going in order to get started. At least I would recommend that. It seems like an awful lot of what has happened in Iraq got started without knowing where we are going and we should not allow that to continue any further. Keep in mind, this war was waged at a time of our choosing and it would seem to me that the American military and the administration would have done a better job with the planning for both the war and the postwar activities. One thing Congress has not done well regarding Iraq in the last year is require that information to be divulged and the plans to be articulated and the exit strategy to be set forth. The one great power Congress has, the one great constitutional power is the power of the purse. We control the pursestrings. We determine how much money is spent. That power ultimately, slowly but ultimately brought the Vietnam War to a close a generation ago. We must exercise that power of the purse now, responsibly, in a way that is true to American ideals, that keeps our commitments to the people of Iraq but nonetheless that clearly sets forth our constitutional requirements and obligations to control the pursestrings, to make sure we know how American taxpayer dollars will be spent and make sure that those dollars are spent pursuant to full information from the White House, a plan from the White House on how to internationalize the reconstruction and how to put Iraqis back in charge of Iraq, and, finally, spending money pursuant to an exit strategy.

□ 2245

When will it end and how will we know that it has ended? I call upon the President to give that information to the Congress in order for us to cast an educated vote on his request for \$87 billion.

At this point I have been joined by the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. DELAHUNT), my colleague and senior member from the House Committee on International Relations and an eloquent member of the Iraq Watch. I welcome the gentleman.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Mr. Speaker, good evening, and I thank the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. HOEFFEL) again for being the driving force behind our weekly efforts to raise questions that we believe have to be answered to educate the American people and to educate Members of Congress as to what direction prospectively we should undertake.

I think for a moment, though, we should go back and review our earlier call to the President to agree to an independent commission to examine the intelligence that was the basis for American military intervention into Iraq because there continue to be questions raised by senior members of the administration, and if the gentleman will remember, our insistence on an independent commission was to depoliticize such an effort. I think we

had discussed here one evening the possibility of the commission that was chaired by two former Senators, one a highly-respected Republican from New Hampshire, Warren Rudman, and another former Democratic Senator from Colorado, Gary Hart. They chaired a commission which tragically foretold almost in a way that eerily predicted the tragedy that beset America on September 11 and the need to address it.

I think it is important to note that that particular commission filed its report some 8 or 9 months before September 11. In fact, I think the exact date was on February 15, and unfortunately no action was taken on that particular report. I do not mean to suggest that it would have in any way forestalled September 11, but I guess the answer to that rhetorical question is that we will never know if we had acted earlier, both Congress and the Bush-Cheney Administration.

But in any event, that independent commission, for example, would address such questions as to the purported links between al Qaeda and Saddam Hussein. I believe that most Americans that are conversant with the intelligence have reached the conclusion that there is absolutely no evidence whatsoever that would link al Qaeda to Saddam Hussein and that Saddam Hussein had anything to do with September 11. Was he an evil tyrant, a despot that wreaked havoc on his people? Of course. I think there is unanimity among the American people and Members of Congress on both sides of the aisle that, yes, the world is better off by having Saddam Hussein out of power. But I think it is important not to just simply accept the fact that there is linkage between al Qaeda and Saddam Hussein because, again, most intelligence reports and intelligence analysts have been very clear that no such intelligence exists.

However, this past weekend, I do not know whether the gentleman had an opportunity to hear the Vice President again suggest, not directly but suggest, that somehow Saddam Hussein was behind September 11. He raised the issue, for example, of the ring leader, the operational ring leader of al Qaeda and its attack on September 11, an individual by the name of Mohamed Atta as having met a senior Iraqi intelligence agent in Prague, Czechoslovakia, when our own FBI has indicated that there are documents that establish that Mohamed Atta was, in fact, in the United States during the time involved. And what I found particularly disturbing is that that senior Iraqi intelligence officer whom it was alleged that Mohammed Atta of al Qaeda met with in Prague, Czechoslovakia in April of 2001, 4 or 5 months before September 11, he has been captured. He has been captured by the American military, and media reports indicate that he refuted the claim, that he was very clear, he never met with Mohamed Atta. And all intelligence analysts that have spoken on this par-

ticular issue or have had conversations with Members of Congress indicate that there is no basis in fact for that allegation, and yet the Vice President, when interviewed by Mr. Tim Russert on Meet the Press, raises that issue again. I am sure there is confusion among the American people when they read well-respected journals, when they listen to thoughtful programs on these particular issues, and while not without some equivocation, the Vice President of the United States continues to use the Mohamed Atta meeting in Prague as a basis to establish a link between Saddam Hussein and al Qaeda.

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

Mr. DELAHUNT. Certainly.

Mr. HOEFFEL. Mr. Speaker, I am afraid that there is very little confusion among the American people about that. Unfortunately, the polls show that two thirds of Americans believe that Hussein was behind 9/11, even though as the gentleman from Massachusetts has correctly pointed out there is not a shred of evidence that Saddam Hussein, as evil as he is, there is no evidence that he was behind 9/11. But the administration has repeatedly suggested it. The Vice President's television appearance on Sunday was one of a long series of such suggestions. The President himself in his speech of a week ago wanted people to believe that stopping the terrorists in Iraq was part of dealing with the people that have led to 9/11, and it is a repeated theme of the administration, and it is a shame. I can only conclude that it is not only a misleading effort to make a false connection, but it is an intentionally misleading effort, and this is a tough situation. It is tough enough to try to find out what happened. It is very unfortunate that the American people have been fooled in that way. Hussein is bad enough. We should deal with him for his own evil record, and we do not need to fool people or to draw false conclusions, and I commend the gentleman for pointing out in great detail this problem.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman would yield, there was a report today, a front-page story in my hometown newspaper, the Boston Globe, and just let me read an excerpt. "Multiple intelligence officials said that the Prague meeting, purported to be between Atta and a senior Iraqi intelligence officer by the name of Ahmed Khalil Ibrahim Samir al-Ani, was dismissed almost immediately after it was reported by Czech officials in the aftermath of September 11 and has since been discredited further. The CIA reported to Congress last year that it could not substantiate the claim while American records indicate Atta was in Virginia Beach, Virginia at the time, the officials said yesterday. Indeed, two intelligence officials said yesterday that Ani himself," this senior Iraqi intelligence official, "now in U.S. custody, has also refuted the report. The Czech Government has also distanced itself from its original claim.

"A senior defense official" in this particular administration "with access to high-level intelligence reports expressed confusion yesterday." A senior defense official within the administration himself expressed confusion "over the Vice President's decision to reair charges that have been dropped by almost everyone else." He said, "There isn't any new intelligence that would precipitate anything like this," the official said, speaking on condition he not be named."

But this underscores the need to have this independent commission. Again, the prototype is there, the Rudman-Hart Commission that did such an outstanding job in terms of depicting the threat of a terrorist attack against the United States months before September 11, statements like that that were made on Meet the Press create confusion. Let us be clear, there is no one, it would appear, in the administration other than the Vice President that would not agree that this piece of evidence has been discredited. Why create confusion? Let the case for the military intervention rise and fall on the facts. That is all we ask. And as we have said consistently among ourselves during the hour that we spend here, some of us supported the President in terms of the request for a resolution authorizing the military intervention. Others of us disagreed. But let us eliminate the confusion. Let us just get to the truth, the truth with no political overtones, the truth so that the American people can have confidence in the integrity of our intelligence. Let us not continue to reair, as the report in the Globe indicated, a piece of evidence that, yes, this administration relied on substantially as establishing a link that somehow Saddam Hussein was behind 9/11. I mean it is not right, and it is not fair to the American people. I mean prominent antiterrorism experts such as Vincent Cannistraro that many of us have observed on CNN and other news shows and is well-respected among his colleagues, he is a former CIA agent and I am quoting him, said that Cheney's "willingness to use speculation and conjecture as facts in public presentations is appalling. It's astounding."

□ 2300

Well, I do not know, but I do know this: this underscores the need to depoliticize as we go into a Presidential campaign a review of the intelligence in the information that led this administration to launch a war. And that received considerable support from Congress.

Because today at a hearing in the Committee on International Relations, a subcommittee hearing on the Middle East, Undersecretary John Bolton stated that, relative to Syria, all options were on the table, including regime change. And that was the position of the President and the administration. He was testifying relative to Syria and its weapons of mass destruction. So I

presume that includes a military option.

Is this administration going to have any credibility if it goes before the international community and indicates that we will exercise that military option in the case of Syria? And what about North Korea? What about Iran?

We have got to sustain our credibility. And the best way to do it is to have an independent commission comprised of prominent Americans whose credibility is unimpeached, who are not, as we all are, impacted or influenced by the politics of an election campaign, whether we be Democrat or whether we be Republican. The American people have a right to the unvarnished truth.

Mr. HOEFFEL. Mr. Speaker, before we introduce some colleagues that have joined us, I want to echo the gentleman's comments and join his call for an independent commission to review the intelligence that was collected and analyzed before we went to war and to review the use that that intelligence was put to.

I can tell this House that I attended a briefing with about 20 Members of the House, a bipartisan group on October 2, 2002, at the White House in the Roosevelt Room where George Tenet and Condoleezza Rice briefed this bipartisan group of Members.

And the representations were made by those two leading members of the administration that with complete certainty they were sure that Saddam Hussein had an active weapons of mass destruction program, that he had an active biological weapon component, an active chemical weapons component, that he was restarting a nuclear component, that he was quite likely to be giving these weapons to terrorists and the rest. And there was no uncertainty expressed whatsoever.

We have now learned, as reports have been declassified, that the White House was being told in a September, 2002, Defense Intelligence Agency report and in an October, 2002, National Intelligence Estimate that there was great uncertainty among the intelligence agencies, including Mr. Tenet's CIA.

The parts that had been declassified have been reported in the press, phrases such as "no credible evidence existing of an Iraqi chemical weapons program."

I have read those reports that the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence has made available to Members that have not yet been declassified.

While none of us are free to quote what we have seen, we can talk about our conclusions. And just as the published reports have indicated, what I read was full of uncertainties, expressed hesitations, "we are not sure about this," "we are not sure about that." But that is not at all what the administration figures were telling Congress in private briefings or to the American people in public statements, repeated as recently as Sunday, as the

gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. DELAHUNT) said, the Vice President repeated.

So we need a bipartisan, independent commission to study the intelligence and its usage before the fighting started in Iraq, because it is hard to conclude anything other than the Congress and the American people were not told the full truth; that we were told things existed with complete certainty, that the administration was telling them that, when in fact when they were making those claims there was great uncertainty.

I would like to ask the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. STRICKLAND) to share a few words.

Mr. STRICKLAND. I want to thank the gentleman from Pennsylvania.

I was standing here listening to the gentleman, and I am thinking to myself, these are very serious accusations; that this administration, this President, his staff, were not fully candid with the American people, and consequently we find ourselves in a situation where today the polls tell us that a vast majority of the American people believe that Saddam Hussein was in some way responsible for what happened on September 11, 2001. There is no credible evidence to support that conclusion. The President needs to say so.

I watched Vice President CHENEY on television this past Sunday. I was stunned that even at this time, after the evidence is so crystal clear, he is still holding on to these, what I would consider, fabrications. The American people I think can be trusted with the truth. But without the truth, the American people simply do not know where to go for the truth or who to believe.

Now, I was listening to the two of you earlier in my apartment, and I wanted to come over and share something that I think is relevant to this discussion, at least in a tangential way.

Earlier today, I was over on the Senate side participating in a House-Senate joint committee meeting of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs. The national commander of the American Legion gave testimony to us today, and he told us what we all know, that we are underfunding VA health care by \$1.8 billion.

Now, I think it is relevant, because the President has recently come to us and he has asked for \$87 billion additional, on top of what has already been appropriated for fiscal year 2003. \$87 billion.

As the gentleman has said and we all believe, we will do whatever we must do to care for our troops, to make sure they have adequate equipment and protection, and I understand \$300 million to \$400 million of that request from the President is to perhaps purchase body armor for our soldiers, armor that I think they should have had a long time ago, because, as I shared not many nights ago on this floor, I got a letter

from a young soldier in Baghdad saying that the men in his group were concerned that they had cheap armor that was incapable of stopping bullets; and they wondered why they could not have the best protection possible under the circumstances.

But, anyway, of this \$87 billion, a large part of it will go to providing for our troops, and we want to support that; but approximately \$20 billion, my understanding is, approximately \$20 billion is for the reconstruction of Iraq.

The question that I think the American people should be asking the President and this Congress is what are your priorities? Why is it so easy to ask for multiple billions of dollars for Iraq and for the rebuilding of Iraq, when we are underfunding our most basic needs here at home, veterans health care, by \$1.8 billion?

If there are veterans listening, they may think STRICKLAND can't be telling the truth. This President would certainly not take such a position with VA health care. I would just encourage them perhaps to contact their veterans service organizations, the VFW, the American Legion, the Disabled American Veterans, the Veterans of Foreign Wars, the Vietnam Vets. All of these groups know what is happening to VA health care.

□ 2310

It just troubles me that we seem so willing to ask for so much for Iraq and for other places around this world and yet we are neglecting the most basic needs at home. And surely, if we are going to set priorities, we should put the American needs first and other needs second or third or fourth.

So I just wanted to point that out. I think it is appropriate that we ask the administration these questions: what are you going to do with that money? And one more thing before I stop. Mr. Speaker, before this last request for \$87 billion, a lot of money had already been spent in Iraq, and my understanding is the Halliburton Corporation, the former employer of Vice President CHENEY, received an unbid contract in the range of \$1.7 billion. I think it is appropriate that we ask the President to commit to us that if we approve this funding that he has asked for, that none of it, absolutely not a dollar of it will go to corporations, Halliburton or any other corporation under an unbid process. The American people need to know that the tax dollars they pay and the money that is appropriated for these needs are spent wisely, and we ought to have an open, transparent process. No more of this unbid contract stuff that leaves us wondering, at least I am wondering, whether or not there was some deal, whether or not there was some sweetheart arrangement that enabled this company or some other company to get access to large amounts of American tax dollars without having to go through a competitive bidding process.

I think that is the least the administration can do, is to make that commitment to us.

Mr. Speaker, I appreciate my colleagues allowing me to participate tonight. I will stick around and listen to what else is going to be said here. I thank the gentleman.

Mr. HOEFFEL. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the gentleman's comments, as always. We have been joined by our colleague, the gentleman from Washington (Mr. INSLEE).

Mr. INSLEE. Mr. Speaker, I am glad to be here. I just want to relate to my colleagues a couple of communications that I was very impressed with that I got in the last 2 days. The first was from a letter from a marine who is from Colfax, Washington, who was very early in the operation in Iraq, who is now recovering in Colfax after he was involved in an incident where a tank basically slid off a road and came down and crushed and killed the Marine standing right next to him and totally crushed this Marine's leg. They thought they were going to have to take it off. He has kept it, and he is now trying to get some weight back on it and he is recovering. It was a remarkable letter I got from him because he talked with great pride about his service. He talked about his feeling for the Iraqi people, and he talked about the importance of the prayers and condolences he has received from all over the country. He got letters from all over the country helping him get through this time of crisis. And it was really heartening just trying to read this letter in the midst of what we have been talking about, about substantial controversy about what happened in Iraq, to read a letter from somebody who felt so proud of his service and is still in the recovery mode. Our prayers and thoughts are with him. And I will not mention his name because he is a humble person, so I will not mention his name tonight.

The second communication was on absolutely the opposite end of the spectrum of at least how I viewed the communication, and that was a communication from the Secretary of Defense, Donald Rumsfeld, who went to Iraq a few weeks ago and toured Iraq. He was asked in Iraq, Mr. Secretary, what did you find about the weapons of mass destruction upon which you based a war, upon which you sent thousands of Americans, hundreds of whom are never going to come home and many, many are going to come home to a disability they are never going to recover from. And his answer was stunning to me. He said, you know what? I was just too busy. I did not ask about that.

Here is an official of the administration who sent our sons and daughters to war based on a premise which has obviously turned out to be false from the information we have today, who went to Iraq and who was apparently so embarrassed about this failure, this massive failure of intelligence that this administration was responsible for

on multiple occasions, and he said he was too busy to ask about our search for weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. In fact, we have 1,500 people at least who have been scouring Iraq for months now to try to find evidence of weapons of mass destruction and have not turned up a gram of weapons of mass destruction.

To me, this administration has some answering to do to the American people, and this body of the U.S. Congress has an obligation to get to the bottom of why this false information led us into a war. That is why I am proud to say I am one of the Members calling for a bipartisan, bicameral investigation, led by a prominent Republican, to find out why our sons and daughters were sent into war based on this faulty information. We have an obligation to get to the bottom of that, not only for our soldiers and sailors who are at risk, but for the future of our future security efforts.

When we deal with Iran, when we face the challenge in Iran, which is a real nuclear threat, with a real nuclear program; in North Korea, which is a real nuclear threat with a real nuclear program, we cannot go to the international community under this cloud of suspicion. We must peel it away, we must get light, we must remove this wound to our Nation's credibility, and we need this commission to get that done.

Mr. Speaker, I want to tell my colleagues I am just astounded by what I heard this weekend from the Vice President, realizing that it is a tough job that we are in. But I was just shocked and I want to quote what I am told he said. I did not see the interview, but I am told he said in part, he said, "So what we do on the ground in Iraq, our capabilities here are being tested in no small measure. But this is the place where we want to take on the terrorists," meaning Iraq. "This is the place where we want to take on those elements that have come against the United States."

After we have had 1,500 people scouring Iraq for months, and the intelligence service that reported to us that the two highest al Qaeda people we had in captivity told us they did not have anything to do with Saddam Hussein, because they did not trust him because he is a secularist and they are fundamentalist Islamists; the Vice President of the United States stands for the American people and said we are just going to go after al Qaeda in Iraq. Where is the shame? We have to get to the bottom of this.

I want to make one more comment about what we are in right now. This is history, but it is something that we have to peel back to find out what happened, and that is where we go from here. I think there is some responsibility now. No matter how we got into this, there is a mess in Iraq. But I want to point out that the difficulty we face in mobilizing support for this is in part because of the administration's failure

to level with the American people at the beginning about what this project was going to cost.

I was just at a charity event and I ran into a gentleman who works for the American Society of Civil Engineers. He showed me this report card that the Society of Civil Engineers just did about the status of American infrastructure in this country, and they basically gave a grade to all of our infrastructure: our bridges, our roads; wastewater had a D, drinking water had a D, dams a D, solid waste, C plus, hazardous waste, D plus, energy, D plus. Basically, America's infrastructure, GPA, D plus, with a backlog of investment needs of \$1.6 trillion, \$1.6 trillion to fix our electrical system and our roads and our bridges and our schools. But this President cannot afford to do it when he wants the taxpayers to shell out \$20 billion for the infrastructure of Iraq, because he will not give up the tax cuts that have jeopardized our ability to move forward in this country. I yield to the gentleman.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Mr. Speaker, the estimates that we as Members of Congress were provided by the administration. If my colleagues remember, the head of the office of OMB, the Office of Management and Budget, which is an arm of the White House, informed us that the cost of the war was going to be \$50 billion. Well, the truth, and this is what the American people have to understand, we are already at \$166 billion, and that is the down payment.

Mr. HOEFFEL. Mr. Speaker, does the gentleman remember that Lawrence Lindsey of the White House Budget Office lost his job when he suggested that the war in Iraq would cost between \$100 and \$200 billion? And as the gentleman says, that is exactly what it has cost to date, yet he got fired for telling the truth.

Mr. DELAHUNT. But I would say to the gentleman, the truth is, that is a down payment.

Mr. HOEFFEL. That is right.

Mr. DELAHUNT. We are on our way, folks, we are on our way to \$1 trillion.

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

Mr. DELAHUNT. Mr. Speaker, I will yield on that, to my good friend from Hawaii (Mr. ABERCROMBIE) and a member of Iraq Watch.

Mr. HOEFFEL. The occasionally late, but always eloquent and passionate member from Hawaii.

Mr. ABERCROMBIE. Well, that is because we are bringing the hammer of inquiry down on the anvil of truth here, or the anvil of inquiry for sure.

□ 2320

The anvil of inquiry for sure. Part of what we are being asked to do and what you have been discussing tonight has to do with the new payment, the latest, I should say, the latest payment. But think about what happens when the Secretary of Defense says, oh, we are making progress, when the delegation from the Congress of which I

was a part was the first to enter, actually enter Baghdad after the attack on Baghdad was over.

Remember, they had a group went in and stayed at the Baghdad airport. They came in. We drove in. We came down that long road from the airport into Baghdad. The last delegation that just went had to be flown from the airport into the compound where Mr. Bremer is and where the troops are because they cannot go on that road any more. I remember coming in this road. I said, We are going to have to have 10,000 troops just to guard the road in from the Baghdad airport because you have the road and you have desert and that means you can come in. Remember, I called upon Thomas Edwards Lawrence, T.E. Lawrence, where is your spirit? Where are you now that we need you? Because you cannot guard that road. All it takes is a cell phone and a trigger mechanism to be able to attack these vehicles.

So when you talk \$66 billion or however you want to break this down, and I hope that we are going to break this down before we vote any money for this, we have to take into account you will need thousands and thousands of troops, longer and longer time at greater expense than even has been mentioned here tonight just to guard the road.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Mr. Speaker, I do not know if you saw "Meet the Press" this last Sunday, but again the Vice President refuted the need that was expressed by the Army Chief of Staff, General Shinseki, that several hundred thousand troops were necessary to bring stability. We have what would appear to be a position that is intransigent, that is in denial, if you will.

If I can for just one moment bring something up that I found particularly ironic, Secretary of State Colin Powell this past week visited Halabja, which is where some 5,000 Kurdish Iraqis lost their lives because of the use of chemical weapons by Saddam Hussein. The Secretary asserted that in this little farming town nestled in Iraq's barren northern mountains, this was ample evidence that former President Saddam Hussein's government possessed weapons of mass destruction and justified, and justified the U.S. decision to go to war. That occurred in 1988 and it was despicable. And what should have occurred was the international community should have responded at that point in time, convened a war crimes tribunal, affected the arrest of Saddam Hussein and brought him to justice for that.

The President at that time was this President Bush's father, or rather in 1988 it was President Reagan. The now-Secretary of State was the then-National Security Advisor to President Reagan.

I find such irony in that because it was many of the same individuals who approached Saddam Hussein to indicate that they were tilting towards the Saddam Hussein regime in its war

against Iran. It is the now-Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld who is the special envoy who went and shook the hand of that thug Saddam Hussein in 1982. He was then taken off the terrorist list; Saddam Hussein was taken off the terrorist lists, and that opened up opportunities for the Iraqi regime.

In 1984 full diplomatic relationships were opened between the United States and Iraq. In 1986, in 1986 we installed an embassy in Baghdad. The American people should know that. In 1988, in 1988 this heinous crime was committed against the Iraqi Kurds in the town of Halabja, and here we are some 15 years later hearing the Secretary of State suggest that this was the evidence, the predicate, if you will, to our intervention.

Now, the story does not end there. The story does not end there. Because it was the President's father, the Bush administration according to a Congressional Research Report that blocked congressional action, that blocked congressional action to impose sanctions on Iraq for committing that crime against the Iraqi people.

Let me read because I think it is important that the American people hear this. I have never heard it stated. This is our own Congressional Research Service, an independent body: "In late 1988 after reports that Iraq had used chemical weapons against the Kurds, the Senate on September 9 passed by voice vote to impose financial and trade sanctions and severe restrictions on the transfer of technology to Iraq. On September 27, the House passed a bill by a vote of 388 to 16; but the bill was not taken up by the Senate. The bill would have prohibited sales to Iraq of any munitions-listed items and called on the President to place import and export restrictions on Iraq, end credit and loan guarantees, and oppose multi-lateral assistance to that country if Iraq did not stop using chemical weapons and agree to international inspections."

Similarly, in May through July of 1990, just before the first Gulf War, the administration helped block action or defeat several measures in both Houses that would have restricted U.S. sales credits, loan guarantees, insurance support in international lending institutions, and trade preferences for Iraq.

The administration helped block action. Of course we knew that he used chemical weapons. In 1990 we knew. And what did we do about it then? We blocked congressional action, the then-administration blocked congressional action.

So the irony of the Secretary of State being in Halabja and suggesting that that was the predicate for military intervention, what irony.

Mr. INSLEE. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman will yield, I want to posit a reason why the administration is trying to reach back for this, for a justification for this war. And the reason is they refused to recognize that they used false information to lead this Nation into a

war, and they have two options at this point. One is to stonewall and search for any justification they have, and now they are focusing on something that happened in 1988 during the previous Bush administration or shortly before that administration.

What they should be doing is embracing our approach, which is to find out why this happened. We think the President should be looking for the people in the administration and holding them accountable for why when they find out why this happened.

□ 2330

He ought to be on our side trying to find out why the administration let down the American people, but no, no. Instead, they want to stonewall this. Stonewalling is not an answer to help this country move forward into how we are going to solve this problem, but it is an indication of what problem the administration has.

This administration has always wanted to sugarcoat this war for the American people and think it was going to be roses and tax cuts for the whole way. It is about time the administration started talking the truth.

Mr. ABERCROMBIE. I think our time is probably at an end.

Mr. HOEFFEL. Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleagues for joining me this evening. The Iraq Watch will be back next week.

SPECIAL ORDERS GRANTED

By unanimous consent, permission to address the House, following the legislative program and any special orders heretofore entered, was granted to:

(The following Members (at the request of Mr. PALLONE) to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material:)

Mr. DOGGETT, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. DEFAZIO, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. EMANUEL, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. PALLONE, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. BROWN of Ohio, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. CORRINE BROWN of Florida, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. STENHOLM, for 5 minutes, today.

(The following Members (at the request of Mr. PAUL) to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material:)

Mr. BURTON of Indiana, for 5 minutes, September 17 and 18.

Mr. HENSARLING, for 5 minutes, September 17.

Mr. CHOCOLA, for 5 minutes, September 17.

Mrs. BLACKBURN, for 5 minutes, September 17.

Mr. NORWOOD, for 5 minutes, today and September 17 and 18.

Mr. PAUL, for 5 minutes, today and September 17 and 18.

Mr. CUNNINGHAM, for 5 minutes, September 17.

Mr. MARIO DIAZ-BALART of Florida, for 5 minutes, September 17.