Mr. Speaker, will the

gentleman yield?

Mr. Speaker, I thank

the gentleman for yielding. I would

just say to the gentleman from California

(Mr. HUNTER), I thank him for

taking this time to bring this very important

issue before the House and, indirectly,

before the American people.

We just returned from a break. I had

plenty of time, ample time, back home

to talk with my constituents, and in

fact traveled around the country a bit

to talk with others from other people’s

districts. The report that the gentleman

makes reference to that is the

Hans Blix report I think speaks volumes

to the questions that I was asked

as I made my way around my district

and around other people’s districts.

The basic question was: How do we

know, or how does the administration

know and how will the Congress help to

determine what our policy should be

toward Iraq when the inspectors cannot

find any weapons, any weapons of

mass destruction? This report speaks

volumes to this.

However, before this report even

came out, there were very strong indications

here in the Congress in the

hearings that the Committee on Armed

Services held, both closed hearings and

open hearings, where members of the

administration, representatives of the

Department of Defense, and representatives

from our intelligence apparatus

or institutions would come before us

and would say, here is what we know.

Without going into the specifics of

what we heard in those closed sessions,

this report that the gentleman from

California (Chairman HUNTER) has gone

to great lengths to describe, which we

have heard about through the media all

day, verifies much of the information

that we learned during those sessions

earlier this year, actually in the fall.

Also, I think it is very interesting to

point out that yesterday the Secretary

of State in a speech in Switzerland said

something that I think is extremely

important on this same question of

how do we know if we cannot find the

weapons. The Secretary of State said

simply this: we have known for a long

time that Saddam Hussein has weapons

of mass destruction. After all, he used

them in the war against Iran. After all,

he used them against his own people,

that is, chemical weapons, which the

gentleman from California (Mr.

HUNTER) referred to here just a short

time ago.

Then the Secretary of State went on

to say that the question is not and the

job of the weapons inspectors is not to

find the weapons; the job, as designated

in Resolution 1441, is to seek the cooperation

of the Iraqi Government in

proving that they have destroyed their

weapons. That is where the Iraqi Government

has been lacking. The Iraqi

Government has steadfastly denied

having any weapons, but has failed to

offer an iota of proof.

For example, if chemical weapons

have been destroyed, why can we not

talk to the people who destroyed them?

If there are no biological weapons, if

those biological substances have been

destroyed, where were they destroyed?

Show us. Let us talk to the people that

destroyed them.

This seems to me to be

just what Colin Powell, the Secretary

of State, was talking about when he

said that the question really is when,

on the one hand, the Iraqi Government

says there are no biological or chemical

or nuclear weapons, why then on

the other hand will they not show us

evidence to prove that? And the answer

seems to me, in light of the Blix report,

quite simple: these weapons really

exist, and therefore they cannot prove

that they do not.

So I think that the answer to the

question that my constituents and people

that I talked to in other parts of

the country over the break, the answer

to the question is quite evident. The

answer is that these weapons do exist,

just as we have maintained for years,

and in particular in the last month.

So both Secretary Powell and Hans

Blix in different words came to the

same conclusion. Hans Blix says on

this subject, ‘‘In the absence of evidence

to the contrary, we must assume

that these weapons exist.’’ We have assumed,

based on evidence that was

gathered by the Committee on Armed

Services during the fall of this year,

that they continue to exist.

Another question which I think is

important, and I think this report

bears on this question as well, my constituents

and people around the country

ask me: What do the French, the

Germans, the Russians, and the Chinese

know that we do not? They are

part of the United Nations Security

Council, as well. I say that the evidence

that is pointed out in the Blix report

should be taken very seriously and

taken to heart by the French and the

Germans and the Russians and Chinese,

because they have as much at stake in

this as we do.

This report, which speaks volumes, is

an extremely important document. I

think one of the statements in the report

by Hans Blix, who has had an opportunity,

obviously, to review the

12,000 pages which the Iraqi Government

forwarded in terms of its supposed

accuracy as an accurate report

on the condition of their weapons of

mass destruction program, Hans Blix

says, we have seen this all before. It is

essentially 12,000 pages copied from the

transmissions that were given to previous

teams of arms inspectors, so the

Iraqis have offered us nothing new

here. In fact, they have shown us once

again that they are, as Hans Blix said

publicly today, not prepared to endorse

the concept of disarmament.

The Bush administration, the President

himself, Secretary of Defense

Rumsfeld, Vice President CHENEY, Secretary

of State Powell, have all maintained

in different ways for months

that we have to do something to engage

this problem. The Blix report

from an independent United Nationsappointed

inspection team has now

verified the contentious situation that

actually exists within the Iraqi Government

today.

I am pleased and again I want to

thank the gentleman from California

for taking this time so that he and I

together can share this information

with our colleagues, and indirectly

with the American people.

Mr. Speaker, if the

gentleman will continue to yield, I just

would like to add that earlier today in

a news report I saw or heard that the

Secretary General of the United Nations,

Kofi Annan, suggested that the

inspectors need more time. Also, the

Secretary of State today indicated that

if there was going to be more time, it

would not be much; but there is going

to be more activity on the part of the

inspectors.

I would say this: I suspect that the

people who are listening to this are not

in a position to answer these questions.

But if Saddam Hussein or his foreign

minister or somebody was listening, I

would say to them that we know that

they had thousands of artillery shells

that were capable of carrying chemical

substances that would kill people to

their targets. They say they have destroyed

them.

If you have destroyed them, show us

where they were destroyed, show us

where the remnants of them are, and

let us talk to the people who did it. Let

us talk to the people who destroyed

them. If you do not have chemical

weapons, show us how you destroyed

them. Show us the people, let us talk

to the people that destroyed your

chemical weapons. That is how we

verify. If you do not have biological

weapons, show us the disposition of

what you had and let us talk to the scientists,

let us talk to the personnel

that destroyed it, because we know you

had it, and we believe you still have it

today. And if you are serious about

making statements that you do not

have it, that these weapons do not

exist, then show us how they were destroyed.

And with regard to their nuclear

weapons program, we know that the

Iraqis imported aluminum tubular material

that is designed and built specifically

for the production of nuclear material.

If those no longer exist, show us

how you destroyed them and let us

talk to the scientists and let us talk to

the personnel who destroyed them. We

have not seen any of these things, and

we have not talked to any of these people,

or the inspectors have not, I should

say.

I heard today another statement that

this process is not about finding weapons,

it is about developing trust. It is

about developing trust between the

Iraqi Government and the rest of the

governments of the world. This is how

we develop trust, by verifying your

statements so that we can trust. And

so I hope that this process will move

forward.

The gentleman from California (Mr.

HUNTER) and I are sometimes asked by

people why we favor going to war. We

do not favor going to war. We favor dismantling

the weapons of mass destruction

that the Iraqis have, and we have

supported the process of inspections.

We have supported the process of investigation.

We have supported the process

of questioning. We have supported

the process of asking questions as to

where these materials are, whether

they have been destroyed. And it is

only as a last resort that we would ever

advocate using military force. The gentleman

from California (Mr. HUNTER)

has a son in the Marine Corps. The last

thing in the world the gentleman

wants to do is to see our country in another

military conflict.

Just last Friday I went to Paris Island

where I proudly watched my nephew

Curt graduate from basic training

in the Marine Corps. The last thing I

want to see is Curtis in Iraq or anyplace

else fighting a war that can be

averted by cooperation between people

and cooperation between countries and

the development of trust.

So once again I give the floor to the

gentleman from California (Mr.

HUNTER). I hope that the Iraqis will in

the next very short period of time cooperate

with the United Nations and

the leadership of various countries

around the world.