Mr. Speaker, when the President invaded Iraq in 2003,

the American people were warned that Iraq's weapons of mass destruction

posed a great threat to peace. We were told that launching a preemptive

war would not make life harder for the Iraqi people nor compromise the

security of the international community. And we were promised that the

quick war to liberate Iraq would come at no cost to America's prestige

abroad.

Five years later, it is painfully clear how very wrong the

administration was and how dearly we are still paying for its mistakes.

The administration launched a war of choice based on half truths,

broken promises, and delusions of a swift and easy victory, but the

most shameful of the administration's claims was that we were fighting

abroad to protect our freedoms at home.

The President argued that sending our Nation's brave servicemen and -

women into an unwinnable occupation was the only way we would safeguard

our civil liberties. Since then, by repeatedly invoking the possibility

of threats to our national security right here at home and abroad, the

administration has justified its unprecedented attack on our

constitutionally protected freedoms.

Mr. Speaker, we can no longer allow these attacks to go unchallenged.

After authorizing the National Security Agency to openly violate

Federal laws by eavesdropping on Americans, the administration

successfully worked to legalize warrantless spying on innocent

Americans. After consistently disregarding laws designed to promote

public access to information, the administration expanded laws that

authorized the government to withhold information from Congress and the

American people.

After championing the virtues of democratic rule of law, the

President has openly condoned torture, denied habeas corpus to

prisoners held in Guantanamo Bay, and fought every single attempt to

hold members and friends of his administration accountable for their

actions.

This abuse of power at the expense of the rights and freedoms of the

American people, often in the name of protecting these very same rights

and freedoms, is a shocking betrayal of the will of the American

people.

Last month, after the House passed legislation ensuring that every

contractor in Iraq would be accountable under American criminal law,

the administration granted immunity to Blackwater Security employees

who were involved in a Baghdad shooting that left 17 civilians dead.

This administration will never take responsibility for their actions.

It will never end the occupation of Iraq. Instead, the attack on our

civil liberties will be the only mission they will have accomplished.

Mr. Speaker, it is Congress' responsibility to stand up to this

President. We must end the administration's war of choice. We must

restore the checks and balances that have been eroded under this

President. We must fight for peace and the protection of civil

liberties. We must fully fund the safe and orderly withdrawal of all

American troops and contractors.

Mr. Speaker, we must give Iraq back to the Iraqi people and America

back its integrity.