Mr. Speaker, it is past time to hold this administration

accountable for its actions in Iraq and for its actions throughout the

region.

Our standing in the world and throughout the Middle East is at an

all-time low. And our standing in popularity has just about

disappeared. The administration's policies have only brought

instability and conflict. The strategy of preemptive war has, and we

have seen it, been met with disbelief. It has been met with criticism

from all corners of the world.

The administration keeps beating the drum of war with Iran, and its

inaction in northern Iraq may lead to armed conflict with Turkey. A

real leader, an effective Commander in Chief, knows that the use of

force should be the very last possible option, not the first. The blame

for this sits squarely in the Oval Office.

And what about the people the administration was supposed to be

liberating? Many live now without the basic services they had for

generations: electricity, clean water, basic health care, education.

And at least 4 million Iraqis have fled their homes. Many are displaced

within their own country, and millions more have escaped to neighboring

Iran and Syria. Despite what the administration has claimed, the fault

does not lie on the Iraqi people or the international community. Once

again the blame belongs one place and one place only: that's with our

administration.

Let's look at our international human rights record, Mr. Speaker.

From Guantanamo to Abu Ghraib, a scandal, to the mercenary Blackwater

security forces, the face of American policy emerges as goons, thugs,

and cowboys.

Or what about torture? The administration says it doesn't promote

torture. Yet day in and day out we read news media reports of an

administration promoting rendition and

These methods allow for everything short of death. The

responsibility lies at the feet of one man. Not a general. Not the

Justice Department. Not the men and women of the intelligence

community. And certainly not the brave men and women who are serving us

in Iraq. One man.

And it does not get much better here, right here at home, where the

administration is pushing for more ways to spy on American citizens.

They are attacking their political adversaries by questioning their

patriotism. They even outed a covert CIA operative. The President at

that time said that anyone caught for such an action would be removed

from his staff. Now it turns out that Karl Rove, Richard Armitage,

Scooter Libby, and Ari Fleischer didn't count and the administration

chose to put them above the law.

Once again, Mr. Speaker, we have to ask ourselves who's really to

blame. I can only think of one person.

And, finally, most shameful of all, the legacy of this occupation of

Iraq has left a generation of men and women with physical and mental

wounds that may never heal. And how did the administration thank them

for their bravery on behalf of our Nation? Walter Reed. Long waits for

necessary medical treatment at local VA hospitals. And in some cases,

extended deployments. What kind of Commander in Chief would do that?

Remember the good old days when past Presidents said, and meant it,

that the buck stops with them? This

administration seems to think the buck stops everywhere but 1600

Pennsylvania Avenue.

Mr. Speaker, it is time for the President to take the responsibility

for his actions and turn the tide around, and he can do that by

providing our men and women in uniform the equipment they need to come

home safely; by funding the safe, responsible, and timely withdrawal of

our troops; and by regaining, in turn, our place as a world leader

promoting peace and stability.

Mr. Speaker, hold this administration accountable. Bring our troops

home. End this senseless occupation.