Mr. Speaker, I thank the distinguished

gentleman for yielding to me.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to ensure that this evening is a somber occasion

because it is a dialogue with our colleagues and one we hope will not

be mired in politics but in truth. I stand somewhat, Mr. Speaker, with

tears in my eyes. The chairman of the Congressional Black Caucus has

convened this Special Order, and I am grateful to him for his continued

leadership, and I look forward to working with the caucus to provide a

voice and a message not only to the American people but to our

colleagues.

As I said, Mr. Speaker, I rise with a heavy heart and tears in my

eyes because we are talking about life-and-death matters; peace and

war. I almost wish, Mr. Speaker, I could turn back the hands of time,

turn back the clock, and find ourselves on the floor of the House on

that fateful fall of 2002. Out of respect for their families, I will

just call them by their first names, but maybe Private Ray David, out

of San Antonio, who died during the Christmas holiday would still be

alive; and maybe Armando, who was a private in the United States Army,

who died just 12 hours ago, might still be alive; or maybe Irving, who

died just about 5 or 6 days ago, from Fort Worth, Armando being from

Houston and Irving being from Fort Worth Texas, might still be alive.

This is not a frivolous discussion, Mr. Speaker. It is a very serious

discussion. I think I would like to raise with my colleagues a

discussion of what do we do next. There are families whose pain will

never leave them, the pain of the loss of their young child, son or

daughter, will forever be with them. Our respect and admiration for

those brave young men and women will forever be a mark on our souls. We

will honor them each Memorial Day, we will cite them year after year,

some 500 and growing.

There are names that many of us will never know. Included in that, of

course, are the loss of civilian lives in Iraq, lives for which the

leaders of our government have said were innocent lives, some even have

been children. The turmoil in Iraq speaks to the fact that this is a

somber and sobering time. So I rise today because my challenge is

whether or not the Congress will perform its duty.

Let me also acknowledge a veteran and friend and respected member of

this House who we will hear from shortly, the gentleman from New York

(Mr. Rangel). I would like to say to him that I look forward to joining

him in commemorating the fallen soldiers as we proceed in this session,

because I think that is extremely important.

But I rise this evening for a different challenge of this Congress.

Yes, the President has accepted the constant request and inquiry for a

commission. He has done so by embracing it and putting it close to the

bosom of the administration. It is one appointed by the administration,

dominated by the administration, run by the administration. And I ask

my colleagues, does the Constitution, in establishing three branches of

government, want us to abdicate our congressional duty of oversight

over the executive branch? They are independent branches, judiciary,

executive and legislative, but just as we have the responsibility of

the purse strings in the House, we also have the responsibility of

oversight over operations and policies of the President and the

administration.

So I believe it is imperative that this Congress, whether it is a

parallel duty, an action, or whether or not it substitutes for this

commission, I believe it is imperative that this Congress wage its own

investigation as to the reasons and the basis of the use of

intelligence that generated a unilateral preemptive strike against

Iraq.

So I intend to offer the Protect America's National Security Act of

2004 that will call on full congressional hearings, no holds barred, if

you will, to use a phrase that we often utilize, questioning what

intelligence was used in the decision of the administration to go to

war, how that intelligence was

analyzed, and on what basis was it utilized to convince the Congress,

the representation to Members of Congress, that weapons of mass

destruction existed. How was that intelligence gathered, who gathered

it, who analyzed it, and how was it presented to Members of Congress

for the decision to be made in a resolution that a preemptive

unilateral attack should be made? I believe also that the American

people need to know.

Finally, included in this bill, I want to ensure that the general

amount, the bottom-line figure utilized by this government in

intelligence gathering, the budget of the CIA, should be produced to

the American people. Mr. Speaker, not the line-by-line item, not to

give them an excuse that we are now intruding on secured matters, but

to give the American people the lump sum as to how much is being

utilized. They deserve to know and we would not be violating any

security for doing so.

This legislation will also include more resources for more trained

intelligence analysts, more analysts trained in Arabic, more

recruitment of diverse analysts, if you will, and then it would have a

provision that would enhance the checks and balances on the use of

intelligence that would be placed as a basis for going to war with any

country in any Nation. The Protect America's National Security Act of

2004.

It is imperative that for the lives lost, for the tears shed, for the

mothers crying, for the fathers' broken hearts, for the wives in

complete confusion, for the children without fathers, sisters without

brothers, brothers without sisters, aunts and uncles that are missing,

we need and owe this to the American people.

I simply would say, Mr. Speaker, that we can now look at language

from the Vice President of the United States on August 26, 2002:

``Simply stated, there is no doubt that Saddam Hussein now has weapons

of mass destruction.''

``Right now Iraq is expanding and improving facilities that were used

for the production of biological weapons.'' President Bush, September

12, 2002.

``The Iraqi regime possesses and produces chemical and biological

weapons and is seeking nuclear weapons.'' President Bush, October 7,

2002.

On what basis were they making these statements? This cannot be left

to a bipartisan commission selected by the President, even if it is

represented to be bipartisan. Congress must do its duty.

``We have also discovered through intelligence that Iraq has a

growing fleet of manned and unarmed aerial vehicles that would be used

to disburse chemical or biological weapons across broad areas. We are

concerned that Iraq is exploring ways of using UVAs for missions

targeting the United States.'' Again, President Bush, October 7, 2002.

Yet the Carnegie report of just a few months ago, and David Kay has

indicated there are no weapons of mass destruction. There were no

weapons of mass destruction at the time that the President and the

administration represented to this Congress and the American people

that they existed.

Mr. Speaker, why is this important? It is important because we have

to go on. Now the President comes to us with a budget that has a

deficit of over $500 billion. He offers to the American people $4.1

trillion in tax cuts because he is asking to make his tax cuts

permanent for 1 percent of Americans. Then he provides a gift to the

American people, $10,368, a burden for each family of four, making tax

cuts permanent. At the same time he increases the burden on veterans by

increasing their copayments, closing veterans hospitals, and denying

access to health care.

I believe this Special Order tonight is so crucial because it raises

for the American people a challenge to them standing up for their

destiny, their destiny as to whether or not we remain in Iraq and lives

continue to be lost. But more importantly is the question of whether or

not we have now a road map that will lead us to war with other

countries around the world unilaterally and preemptively. That is why I

believe it is crucial for the American public to stand up and be heard

on the Protect America's National Security Act of 2004, demanding this

House and Senate to do its job with a full and comprehensive

investigation.

Lives that were lost, those willing to go into harm's way, did not

for a moment stop and ask the question why. They were called to duty.

They took an oath of office. They were National Guard, Reservists, and

enlisted personnel; and they went willingly on behalf of the United

States of America. They died on the fields of battle, their blood shed

because of us. We in this Congress who still live owe them not only a

debt of gratitude but we owe them the truth. We owe our Reservists an

extension of their benefits, the ability to retire at 55, and we owe

them the greatest understanding of the sacrifice that they have made.

In closing, as my colleague indicated, we have all visited the young

men and women in our hospitals, Bethesda Naval and Walter Reed. Their

faces are bright with a sense of hope and duty. They talk about the

tragedy of their loss, lost limbs, lost spirit; but they remain

undaunted, willing to serve again.

I cannot imagine that this Congress, many of whom stood on the floor

of this House and cried as they debated the resolution to make the

choice of giving the President unfettered authority to go to war, I

cannot now imagine that this Congress would refuse its duty for finding

out the truth on behalf of those who were sent to war by our vote, by

those who voted for it, and then of course then sent these young men

and women off to war and refuse to now stand to find out the truth. We

hope that that will occur.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that we make sure that this occurs as we move

forward in this year.