If I can interrupt my friend, how many briefings has

Dr. Rice volunteered up to this point in time to come in and to consult

and to engage in a discourse and a dialogue with Members of Congress?

What you are saying is that the President's National

Security Adviser, who is responsible for coordinating American foreign

policy, particularly in times of crisis like obviously we find

ourselves currently in, has not on a single occasion briefed Democratic

Members of the House of Representatives, at least to your knowledge?

I think what is particularly interesting, when we talk

about consultation, and those that are listening to us this evening,

members of our group that we call the Iraq Watch, ought to be aware

that this is a complaint that not only comes from the Democratic side

of the aisle, but also from Republicans.

I remember noting a particular quote by Senator Hagel who serves on

the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in describing his perception of

the consultative process during the course of the debate leading up to

the war as one which he felt that the White House considered Congress

as a nuisance.

Hopefully, hopefully, that attitude will not occur, and conceivably

we could have some discourse and dialogue with key members of the

administration such as Dr. Rice on a regular basis.

I think in all fairness, however, I should note, and those who are

listening to us this evening, that on a regular basis, the Secretary of

Defense, Mr. Rumsfeld, has volunteered to come before Members of

Congress and provide briefings. But I have been particularly

disappointed with Dr. Rice, who, up until this point in time, has not

in any way engaged in a conversation with Members of Congress.

Mr. Speaker, what I find particularly disturbing, and I

think that the American people have reached, by a vast majority, the

conclusion that many of us reached during the course of the debate on

whether Congress should authorize the executive to attack Iraq

militarily, and that is the case was never made, never made in terms of

the existence of weapons of mass destruction. Neither was the case ever

made in terms of a relationship or linkage between al Qaeda and Saddam

Hussein, particularly as focused on September 11. There was no

involvement by the Iraqi regime on September 11, and there never had

been a significant relationship between al Qaeda and the Saddam Hussein

regime in Baghdad.

But what I find even more disturbing is that reluctance of the

administration to let go of this myth. It is as if they so intensely

embrace this belief that they are incapable from detaching themselves

from that belief and accept reality.

What I thought was particularly striking is that after the so-called

major combat phase of the Iraq war, as it was announced by the

President, and the inability of the existing forces to discover weapons

of mass destruction, he created the so-called Survey Group, the Iraq

Survey Group headed by a former U.N. inspector who was described as

hawkish in his views in terms of whether there should have been or

whether the United States was correct in invading Iraq. His name was

David Kay. I am sure many of us remember the name, many of those

watching here tonight remember David Kay. He appeared on a number of

television programs, wrote opinion pieces in major media outlets, and

he was selected by the President to head the effort.

Well, last October he returned to Washington, consulted with

Congress, consulted with Secretary Rumsfeld and reported that he was

wrong. In fact, he testified before a Senate committee and made that

statement which ended up in Newsweek that I believed was refreshing,

because it reflected a candor and an honesty that has been lacking. And

he stated passionately that we were all wrong. We were all wrong. Yet,

as the gentleman from Washington indicated, the President, and

particularly the Vice President will not let go, wants to create a

reality that is simply inaccurate, that is false.

Recently, David Kay stated that the U.S. is in grave danger of

destroying its credibility at home and abroad if we do not own up to

the mistakes that we made. We are a proud people. We are a democracy,

and in a democracy, to move forward we have an opportunity to speak the

truth, to acknowledge mistakes, and to learn from those mistakes. As I

said earlier, the Vice President on more than one occasion has been, I

do not want to say overruled, that is not the right word, but after

making a statement the President himself has indicated that the

statement was not accurate.

Well, we do know this: we do know that Halliburton,

according to a CBS report, established a subsidiary with an office in

the Cayman Islands, and when an investigative team from CBS went to the

office in the Cayman Islands, do my colleagues know what they found?

They found a small office without a single person in the office. That

obviously caused more interest.

Further investigation revealed that this particular subsidiary of

Halliburton in fact had an office in Dubai in the United Arab Emirates.

That particular subsidiary was dealing with another member of the so-

called Axis of Evil club: Iran. They were supplying the services and

the products necessary for Iran to upgrade its oil industry.

So the conflict, if you will, at least as I see it, and some would

suggest that it is illegal, that it is a subterfuge that there are on

the books of the United States Criminal Code laws that would prohibit

American corporations such as Halliburton from dealing with rogue

nations. My memory is that the title of the particular legislative

provisions is called Trading With the Enemy Act. We had sanctions, and

yet we have Halliburton, a subsidiary of Halliburton trading with Iran;

Iran who, clearly, if we examine the reports of our own Department of

State, to a far greater magnitude than anything that Saddam Hussein had

done in Iraq as far as encouraging terrorists, terrorist organizations,

that if there was a nation on the planet that sponsored terrorism and

terrorist organizations, it was in Iran and, at the same time,

Halliburton was supporting them in terms of the key component of their

economy.

Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman will yield for a moment.

I do not want the audience or whoever may be watching us have this

conversation tonight to perceive this simply to be a one-sided partisan

attack on the White House because that would be a distorted view of our

purpose and our intent.

I concur with that, but let me read something from The

Washington Post of last week.

That is accurate.

I think we have to acknowledge that there are

Republican Members of this House and the other body that say it like it

is, that speak the truth, that are not hesitant to take on a President

of their own party.

Let me just read to you a statement that was attributed to the vice

chair of the House Committee on Armed Services on which you serve, the

gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. Weldon), a Republican, from

Pennsylvania. He charged that ``the President is playing political

games by postponing further funding requests until after the election

to try to avoid reopening debate on the war's cost and future. Weldon

described the administration's current defense budget request as

outrageous and immoral and said that at least $10 billion is needed for

Iraqi operations over the next 5 months.'' There needs to be a

supplemental whether it is a Presidential election year or not.

Let me note that the Senate chair of the foreign

relations committee, who we all know and respect, Senator Lugar, along

with the ranking member, Senator Biden, urged the administration to be

more forthcoming about its strategy for returning Iraq to the control

of its people. And, again, this is from an article last Wednesday from

The Washington Post: ``The Bush administration has sometimes failed in

the past to communicate its Iraq plans and cost estimates to Congress

and the American people, Lugar said, and must recognize that its

domestic credibility on Iraq will have a great impact on its efforts to

succeed.''

Can I use another word? My colleague said ``wishful

thinking.'' Let me be very clear. What we are talking about here is

competence or incompetence, and we are not talking about the military

who, clearly, have performed professionally, heroically, and deserve

our praise and deserve our support. But what we are talking about is

the civilian leadership at the Pentagon and this administration and

this Presidency.

Let me just for one minute, if I can, here we are now talking about

whether there should be a supplemental budget. And recently a colleague

of ours, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. Edwards), visited Iraq and

returned in the latter part of March and had private conversations with

the generals in charge of the post-combat phase, if you will, according

to the President. And they informed him that if there was not a

supplemental, there would be serious problems confronting the American

military.

Again, in a recent story, a recent report, dated April 21, so that is

last Wednesday, this is what is happening. Let us be very clear, we

have heard again and again colleagues stand up and talk about the

inadequate protection being provided to American troops, whether it be

vests, whether it be unarmored Humvees. So to make it up, here is what

is happening. According to this report, the military is scrambling to

fill its needs. The Pentagon last week diverted 120 armored Humvees

purchased by the Israeli defense forces to Iraq. Yesterday, the Army

announced a $110 million contract for still more armored Humvees. This

is incompetence. That is what this is about. It is not just about

credibility; it is about incompetence.

An unreal expectation that the numbers of troops that would be

necessary in May of 2003 and 3 months thereafter would be 30,000. And,

yet, the Under Secretary of Defense, Mr. Wolfowitz, in a very derisive

way when asked about the estimate that was given to the Senate by

General Shinseki of 200,000 troops, said it was wildly off the mark.

Well, Mr. Wolfowitz, now you are scrambling, and now we have American

military personnel at risk.

I am sure the Iraqi people will welcome that.

A secret agreement.

And the incompetence.

Prince Bandar.

We have already had the evidence of that. It has been

demonstrated very, very clearly.

I remember the Secretary of Defense speaking to the fact that there

was some 70,000 Iraqi security forces. Well, the truth is that there

were about 3,000 of them that had actually received some 2 weeks of

training. That is not being honest and forthcoming with the Congress of

the United States and the American people. And then we learn during

their first encounter about one in every 10 of Iraq security forces

actually work against U.S. troops during the recent militia violence in

Iraq, and an additional 40 percent walked off the job because of

intimidation, the commander of the first armored division said

Wednesday, and that is Major General Martin Dempsey.

Well, speaking about where conservatives are, and again

I think it is extremely important for us because we acknowledge that we

are Democrats, but there is a growing opinion on the part of all

Americans from whatever political perspective that they hold that the

credibility that we see is dissipating now, as well as the competence

in the planning has been a failure.

Let me read something from a highly regarded national conservative

leader by the name of Clyde Prestowitz. This was a column that appeared

in my hometown paper, the Boston Globe. And more and more traditional

conservative voices in this country are echoing these sentiments. And

this White House and this administration should listen very carefully

to the traditional Republican conservatives in this country who will

voice similar concerns and doubts as we do here on a once-a-week basis.

``For a moment during the spring, neoconservatives associated with

the Bush administration thought they had died and gone to heaven. The

quicker than expected fall of Saddam Hussein seemed to justify their

vision of a new America that would reshape world politics. The United

States would use its overwhelming military power to crush tyrannical

regimes, they declared, and establish American-style capitalist

democracies in their place. Domestically, the neocons only question was

whether the tax cuts aimed at reshaping American society would be

merely big or gigantic. As time passes, however, it has become

increasingly clear that this course is neither neo nor conservative and

that it may lead more quickly to hell than to heaven.

``This is not the foreign policy agenda traditional conservatives

like myself voted for in 2000. Concerned about growing anti-American

feeling around the world, we were pleased when candidate Bush spoke of

adopting a humbler attitude in foreign policy and of reducing U.S.

overstretch abroad. We also anticipated that a new Bush administration

would embrace long-standing conservative values such as smaller

government, fiscal responsibility, tax cuts carved with a goal of

balancing budgets, strong protection of individual rights, and support

of healthy State and local governments.''

I dare say that that is an opinion that is being echoed among

conservatives of both parties. Recently, there was a similar piece, I

will not take the

time because I know we are getting towards the end, that appeared in

the New York Times. But I would commend those that are watching us this

evening to go to the April 9 edition of the New York Times and read a

piece by David Kirkpatrick entitled ``Lack of Resolutions in Iraq Find

Conservatives Divided.''