Will the gentleman be interested to know that the

Wall Street Journal on the 23rd of this month made a report, and I

quote: ``Before the war, United States companies used French units or

French go-betweens to sell goods to Iraq. Since the war, French firms

are using U.S. operations to bid for contracts in Iraq, though it is

unclear whether they will succeed.''

The Journal added, ``Between 1998 and 2002, United Nations documents

show $397 million in sales to Iraq by French units of U.S. companies.

The sales coincided with the period when the Clinton and Bush

administrations were increasing pressure on Mr. Hussein, and the

practice extended well beyond early 2002, when Mr. Bush included Iraq

in his so-called Axis of Evil.

Halliburton did tens of millions of dollars of business with Iraq in

the late 1990s when it was still led by Vice President Cheney. Much of

that business was done through French units. Mr. Cheney said during the

2000 election campaign that Halliburton had a policy against trading

with Iraq. The Halliburton contracts mentioned in the United Nations

documents involved units and joint ventures that came with the purchase

of Dresser, Incorporated in 1998.

Will the gentleman recall that during the Watergate investigation,

that Woodward and Bernstein, when they were following through on

various contacts and leads, that they had reported that it was not

always that people were lying to them, it was that they were not

telling the truth. Unless you knew the exact question to ask ahead of

time, that is to say unless you knew the information and the answers to

your questions ahead of time, you might actually ask a question in

which the other party could avoid telling you the truth while not

absolutely lying to you.

It may well have been, as Mr. Cheney said, that Halliburton had a

policy against trading with Iraq, but apparently it did not mean that

units or subunits of Halliburton located in other nations could do the

trading for them, thus benefiting and profiting the Halliburton company

while Mr. Cheney was in charge of it. This is the caliber of the Vice

President's ability to have any kind of veracity when it comes to

statements about weapons of mass destruction or anything else having to

do with whether or not he or his company profited from trading with

Iraq.

Would the gentleman yield on that point? I just read

something from the Wall Street Journal, an investigative report of the

Wall Street Journal. I hardly think that the Wall Street Journal can be

called a tool of the Democratic Party.

Would the gentleman yield again? The Washington

Post, which has editorially supported the war in Iraq.

Let us just keep right on with what we are doing

here. We are analyzing the situation in which American troops are in

harm's way and any accusation that this has anything to do with

Republicans or Democrats is not only entirely beside the point, but

undermines the dialogue and discussion that has to take place when we

are in a situation of war.

As the gentleman well knows, this Member has disagreed publicly and

privately with the President of the United States when it was Bill

Clinton and it was a Democrat. This gentleman, I can tell you, has

never taken a position on the basis of who was President of the United

States, but rather what the position of the United States should be in

the consul of world powers in terms of the peace and welfare of the

planet and the United States' role in it. Whether it is a Democratic

President or a Republican President, we have to be accountable.

Would the gentleman yield? I serve as the ranking

member on the subcommittee of the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr.

Weldon). And I can tell my colleague that back in the time of President

Clinton's administration when the Kosovo and Bosnia issues were there,

I was privileged to go with the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr.

Weldon) and other Members in a joint Democratic and Republican

congressional delegation to the area because of disagreements we had in

the way we were conducting both our foreign policy and military

operations there.

The gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. Weldon), I believe, is also a

supporter of the fact that we went to war with Iraq. So his admonitions

here are based on his perceptions, I am certain, serving as his ranking

member and counting myself as among his good and personal friends in

this body. I have deep affection and respect for him both personally

and as a colleague in this body.

If he is making these statements, he is making them because he

believes as a supporter of this war effort that this is, in fact, in

the interest of the troops and the interest of the Nation.

So this is something that is not partisan in nature. This is

something that has to be addressed by all of us as our responsibility

of one of 435 people in this body representing the interests of this

Nation.

If the gentleman would yield, both he and the

gentleman from Washington (Mr. Inslee) have made the point over the

last several minutes that a lack of planning, a lack of clear-sighted

planning has brought us to the present path.

I would like to cite an article in The Washington Post for summary

purposes made just yesterday. At the confirmation hearing before the

Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, where Mr. John Negroponte, Mr.

Bush's nominee to be ambassador to Iraq, was being questioned, the

summary in the story by Walter Pincus and Colum Lynch is as follows:

``Panel members expressed confidence in Negroponte while voicing

skepticism that the United States had a clear enough strategy in place

for Iraq.''

Let me be a little more specific, specific in the words of Mr.

Negroponte with respect to his assuming the ambassadorship in Iraq and

planning for what is going to happen to our troops and what is going to

happen to Iraq in terms of its sovereignty: Under questioning by

Senator Hagel, Republican of Nebraska, when asked what would happen if

there was disagreement between Iraqi authorities and the United States

military over how to handle a situation similar to the unrest in

Fallujah, that would require, ``a real dialogue between our military

commanders, the new Iraqi government, and, I think, the United States

mission as well,'' Negroponte said. Think about that. Can you imagine a

combat situation such as is faced right now in Fallujah. It has nothing

to do with the competence or incompetence of the United States

military; it has everything to do with the competence or incompetence

of the political policies that put the military in that situation.

We are now faced with circumstances in which military action becomes

the political policy, that in order to support the political policy,

you have to support military action, whatever it might be.

Going on, in the end, however, Negroponte said, ``The U.S. military

is going to have the freedom to act in their self-defense, and they are

going to be free to operate in Iraq as they best see fit.'' Operate in

their self-defense.

Mr. Negroponte, perhaps unconsciously, recognizes we are not on the

offense.

We are not accomplishing any mission. What we are saying is, what I

have said on this floor, that on June 30, the United States military is

going to set adrift in a desert sea of political anarchy where our

military action will be self-defense. Is that what we are sentencing

the United States military to? A daily round of defending itself? For

what? Under what circumstances can we justify the continued presence of

the United States military if their sole military purpose according to

the ambassador nominee to Iraq is to defend themselves?

Continuing, what is more, he said, Iraqi military forces ``will come

under the unified command of a U.S.-led multinational force. Negroponte

emphasized the interim government will not need law-making authority

because it will just have two prime functions: running 25 government

ministries and preparing for next year's election of a transitional

national assembly. Among the most sensitive aspect of the U.S.

transition plan has been what has been called the transitional

administration law devised by the United States and its appointed Iraq

governing council.''

At the White House yesterday, Mr. Scott McClellan, the press

secretary, told reporters, and I am quoting from the article ``that an

annex to the transitional law is being written that will limit the

interim government's power.''

``Iraqis have made it clear they want limits on the

authority of the interim government,'' Mr. McClellan said.

We are in a situation where presumably authority is being transferred

the 30th of June to an interim Iraqi government when we are writing an

annex, which is a fancy word for saying we are writing an addendum, we

are adding another codicil, another provision of this transitional law.

They are still writing it. Because, as Mr.

Negroponte said in responding to a question about the annex by Senator

Dodd, a Democrat of Connecticut, Mr. Negroponte said he had not been

briefed on it. ``I am just not at the moment clued in as to the

discussion about the annex.''

This is the gentleman who by June 30 is supposed to take over in

Iraq. It cannot be more clear the stumbling and the bumbling that has

taken place to this point.

And the incompetence that has taken place up to this

point is to continue.

How is it possible that the ambassador designee says, I am not clued

in, even on the most fundamental addition to the transitional authority

law that will set the circumstances and boundaries for how the United

States military, let alone its diplomatic function, is to take place in

a presumably sovereign Iraq?

I want to point out that that story is in the

Washington Times. Again, if someone wants to think that this is a

partisan situation, everyone knows the Washington Times is in favor of

this war, that the Washington Times represents itself to be a

conservative voice. This is a report from the Washington Times.

Mr. Speaker, it remains for us to thank you for your

patience and forbearance tonight. I believe at this opportunity we can

indicate to our colleagues and to those watching us and participating

with us tonight on C-SPAN broadcasts, these very valuable Special

Orders that the House prepares to enable Members to speak to the

broader American audience and elsewhere across the country. Thank you

and thank them.

At this time, pending our next session of Iraq Watch, we would move

to adjourn the House.