Mr. Speaker, we do not engage in hyperbole during the

Iraq Watch hour, your generous words are a bit overstated, but I want

to thank you for claiming the time this evening. I know my colleagues

who are regulars on the Iraq Watch are coming. We are assembling.

We want to review again what the current status of events in Iraq and

the Middle East are so that we can inform ourselves and hopefully

inform our colleagues and help educate the American people.

I am sure you are aware that just recently there was what is

described as a national intelligence estimate which painted a very

bleak picture of the future in Iraq. The national intelligence estimate

is a compilation of information drawn from the CIA and other American

intelligence agencies. As I indicated, it presents a very, very bleak

picture.

It is outlined that there are three different scenarios. The one that

is most disturbing is the possibility that Iraq not only will be

fractured, but that a full-scale civil war could break out at any time,

but I guess, as a Member of Congress, what is more disturbing is that

it was just, I think, yesterday when the question was posed to

President Bush, what about the national intelligence estimate and the

very pessimistic perspective that was presented by our own intelligence

agencies, that his response was, well, they are guessing, they are

guessing.

That certainly is disturbing to hear our leader, the leader of the

free world, make that kind of a statement. I wonder if he reached that

conclusion prior to our national tragedy of September 11 when he was

presented what is called a Presidential daily briefing on August 6,

2001, that was titled ``Bin Laden Determined to Strike in the United

States.'' I wonder if he was guessing at that point in time because he

had that information, and now, now we are presented again with a

national intelligence estimate that presents a far different scenario

than what we hear from the President, from the White House, from the

Vice President.

Of course, tomorrow, the interim prime minister will be addressing

this House. I think it is important to understand that this was a prime

minister that was selected through a nonelective process. I am sure we

are going to hear a lot of rhetoric. It will sound good, but it is not

the true picture, I would suggest, of what our intelligence agencies

tell us is transpiring in Iraq today.

Well, Mr. Speaker, the noted conservative columnist, a

prominent Republican, William Buckley, recently made the statement that

this administration has a dismaying capacity to believe its own PR.

Well, you know, this is not about public relations. This is about war

and

peace and the loss of American military lives and untold hundreds of

billions of dollars of American taxpayers' money. That is what this is

about. To simply say that things are rosy, and they are guessing, I

think does a disservice to our intelligence agencies.

Again, to point to the article that was as recent as September 16, it

was on the front page of the New York Times. It was entitled, ``U.S.

Intelligence Shows Pessimism on Iraq's Future'': ``A classified

national intelligence estimate prepared for President Bush in late July

spells out a dark assessment of prospects for Iraq, government

officials said Wednesday. There's a significant amount of pessimism,

said one government official who has read the document.''

This is just unacceptable, to have the President of the United States

say, in response to a question, that they are just guessing. And before

we go any further, I think we should indicate that, while we happen to

be Democrats, our concern is shared by many prominent Republicans,

including men that serve in the United States Congress. So what I have

done is I have extracted some quotes from our friends and colleagues on

the other side of the aisle.

On September 19, just several days ago, Senator John McCain said this

on Fox News, ``I'd like to see more of an overall plan articulated by

the President.'' Well, so would the American people.

Senator Richard Lugar, another prominent Republican, chairman of the

Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, less than a week ago, in

response to a question about the slow pace of reconstruction in Iraq,

had this to say, ``Well, this is incompetence in the administration.''

``The fact is, a crisp, sharp analysis of our policies is required.

We didn't do that in Vietnam, and we saw 11 years of casualties mount

to the point where we finally lost. We can't lose this. This is too

important. There's no question about that. But to say, `Well, we just

must stay the course, and any of you who are questioning are just hand-

wringers', is not very responsible. The fact is, we're in trouble.

We're in deep trouble in Iraq.'' That is Chuck Hagel, respected

Republican from Nebraska.

Chuck Hagel goes on to say, ``It's beyond pitiful. It's beyond

embarrassing. It is now in the zone of dangerous.''

Well, again, I think we have learned that much of what we hear coming

from the White House is fodder for a political campaign. But let me

suggest that the President should put aside politics, not continue to

paint a rosy picture when those who ought to know, know that the

reality is totally different. Do not mislead the American people. The

American people were misled before. They were misled when it was

presented to the American people right on this floor that there were

weapons of mass destruction in Iraq.

It was the American people who were misled when it was suggested that

there were links between al Qaeda and Saddam Hussein. That was false,

and we know it was false because the independent commission, five

Republicans and five Democrats, concluded that it was inaccurate.

Mr. Speaker, reclaiming my time, when we talk about

failure, from the beginning, after our resources were diverted from the

military action that was achieved in Afghanistan, the policy that has

been promulgated by this administration can only be characterized as a

sequence of failures and, additionally, a refusal to accept

responsibility.

It would be so much more credible for the President to stand up and

acknowledge the serious consequences that occurred as the direct result

of this policy.

I thought it was interesting that the individual that he appointed to

conduct the survey in Iraq to determine where at that point in time,

because we were told that there were weapons of mass destruction, where

they were located, called on the President and that man's name is David

Kay, as many of us know, called on the President to come clean with the

American people because he was concerned that if we did not do so, if

the President did not do so, then the credibility of the United States

would be eroded and that when another international crisis erupted and

we had to seek out support from other nations, this time we would be

looked at as having misled not only the American people but the rest of

the world. And that is exactly what has happened.

If anyone has traveled abroad, the antipathy and the hostility that

has been expressed about this President and, tragically, about our

Nation because of the errors and the lack of willingness to accept

responsibility has hurt our national interests and our national

security, when his own appointee who was highly regarded and highly

respected was the chief weapons of mass destruction inspector appointed

by this President said, Mr. President, come clean, tell the American

people that we were all wrong. He said that here in this building in a

hearing before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. And what does

this White House do? They continue to shuffle. They reluctantly say,

well, maybe that was a mistake. And then the Vice President continues

to suggest that somehow there are links between Saddam Hussein and

Osama bin Laden. The only link is that Osama bin Laden despised,

despised and hated, Saddam Hussein, whom he considered a corrupter of

Islam.

Mr. Speaker, reclaiming my time, let me suggest this as

an answer. Because if one repeats it often enough, a large number of

people, unfortunately, will accept it. That is why it is important to

have in a leadership role during these very dangerous times an

administration that will be forthright, that will be honest, that will

admit mistakes, and that will listen to others. That is what is

important.

Mr. Speaker, reclaiming my time, they say that now. But

they were not saying that during the course of the major combat phase.

They were saying that we were going to be greeted as liberators, that

people would be dancing in the streets. That is absolutely false. And

yet they insist on maintaining the message. But it is not an honest

message.

And, Mr. Speaker, we would not have to pay for it.

Mr. Speaker, reclaiming my time, does the gentleman

know what they call those large swaths of territory?

Mr. Speaker, the gentleman means no-go zones.

Mr. Speaker, reclaiming my time, I think I would

suggest this, that what we are seeing in Iraq, because of the

incompetence of this White House and this administration, is a

burgeoning number of safe havens for terrorism. Yet we hear that there

is progress being made on the war on terror. How absolutely false that

is.

Again, if I can just take 2 minutes, I do not want to leave the

impression that we are speaking here in partisan tone, because so many

prominent Republicans, colleagues of ours, share this view. If I may,

just indulge me for a moment to read some quotes.

From the former vice chairman of the House Permanent Select Committee

on Intelligence, Doug Bereuter, highly regarded and well-respected.

Upon leaving here he sent a letter to his constituents. In it he said,

``I have reached the conclusion now that the inadequate intelligence

and faulty conclusions have been revealed; that, all things being

considered, it was a mistake to launch that military action, especially

without a broad and engaged international coalition. Our country's

reputation around the world has never been lower and our alliances are

weakened. Now we are immersed in a dangerous, costly mess, and there is

no easy and quick way to end our responsibilities in Iraq without

creating future problems in the region and in general in the Muslim

world.''

That is somebody who served on the Permanent Select Committee on

Intelligence in this House.

A former advisor to Mr. Bremer, who was personally recruited by Dr.

Condoleezza Rice, the National Security Advisor, had this to say about

3 weeks ago. His name is Larry Diamond. ``We are significantly worse

off strategically than we were before. There are really no good

options.'' Another Republican.

Let me quote William Buckley once more. ``If I knew then what I know

now about what kind of situation we would be in, I would have opposed

the war.''

Someone who works in this building on the other side, ``Our committee

heard blindly optimistic people from the administration prior to the

war and people outside the administration, what I call the dancing in

the street crowd, that we just simply will be greeted with open arms.

The nonsense of all that is apparent.''

The lack of planning is apparent. What we had here was a volatile

combination of the ideology, the so-called neoconservative influence in

this administration, combined with a magnitude of incompetence that if

it occurred in the private sector, heads would have rolled, people

would have been fired and a new team would come in.

Reclaiming my time, of course it does. The gentleman

talks about our soldiers. I do not think there is any community in this

country that expected the need to call upon our National Guard and our

Reserves to the extent that they did, particularly when the Deputy

Secretary of Defense, Mr. Wolfowitz and Secretary Rumsfeld dismissed

General Shinseki, who at that point in time was the head of the United

States Army, his estimate that 200,000 to 300,000 troops would be

needed. They said that was a wild exaggeration.

Mr. Wolfowitz, that neoconservative who in many ways was the

intellectual author of this adventure, dismissed it, because as Dick

Lugar said, we were going to be treated to flowers and the Iraqi

equivalent of champagne and dancing in the streets. How long did that

last?

But now, but now, oh, no, now we are calling up on a regular basis

for deployment after deployment our Reserves, to the point where

Lieutenant General James Helmly, who heads the U.S. Army Reserves, said

just this past week that the war in Iraq is creating great stress on

the Reserves, and he is concerned that they will have a tough time

meeting their recruiting goals next year. He also noted that the

Reservist jobs in Iraq are just as dangerous as regular troops. There

is no more a secure rear area. Our truck drivers and our military

police have become frontline troops, again underscoring the

incompetence of the planning in terms of the military planning and the

reconstruction phase of this inept administration.

Mr. Speaker, reclaiming my time, I think what we are

saying is please, Mr. President, just give it to us straight, okay? Try

a little bit of Harry Truman. Lay it out there, the good, the bad and

the ugly. The American people can handle it. The American people

deserve to know. Unfortunately, this particular White House has an

obsession with secrecy.

We know that. Everybody knows that. But if I can, just for one

moment, get back to that $87 billion that has emerged as an issue in

this election. I voted against the $87 billion. I do not know how

either of my colleagues voted; they voted against it. I dare say we

voted against it because rather than providing the money to the Iraqi

government as a loan, this White House, this President, insisted that

we just give it away to the Iraqi government. It was a big give-away.

There is no other major donor to the reconstruction effort in Iraq that

did not require the monies that are donated or given to be done on a

basis of a loan so that their taxpayers would be repaid.

A give-away.