I just wanted to point out to my friend from

Washington, Mr. Speaker, that not only is this gentleman that he is

talking about responsible for some of the beheadings, the reports are

that he himself, he himself has been the individual that has actually

carried out the beheadings of Americans.

Mr. Speaker, some may ask, why are these Members of

the House of Representatives standing here talking about past history?

Why are they not talking about what is happening today? Well, sadly, we

lost three more American soldiers today. Three more today. Every day we

are losing American soldiers.

But we are talking about what has happened in the past and the

mistakes that were made in the past because the very people who are

responsible for that terrible misjudgment or those misjudgments are the

very same people who want to remain in power so that they can make

decisions for the future. So, in a sense, as we talk about what

happened in the past tonight, we are doing it because we are concerned

about the future. We are concerned about the same people who made such

terrible misjudgments, who misled the American people, want to continue

to be in those positions of power.

I would agree with my friend that we have misplaced our priorities.

During the Republican convention in New York, the President spoke for

63 minutes during his acceptance speech. And all during that convention

there were multiple references to the tragedy of September 11, when so

many Americans were killed. But it is almost beyond belief to know that

the President talked for 63 minutes, and never once did he mention

Osama bin Laden. There are multiple references throughout that week to

Saddam Hussein, but not one reference on the part of the President to

Osama bin Laden, the man who was responsible, the one who attacked our

country, the one who masterminded that terrible day of September 11.

It is as though he has disappeared. We do not hear his name mentioned

even by the President. He is the one the President referred to in this

very chamber when he said, ``He can run, but he cannot hide.'' The sad

truth is, he ran, and he has successfully hidden. And in his hiding, he

is planning the next attack upon this country. That is the sad truth.

It is almost as if we have decided that Osama bin Laden is no longer

important, this one who was the major person responsible for attacking

us. It is almost beyond belief that we could find ourselves in this

situation at this point in time after all that has happened. I just

think we should remind ourselves that we have not yet apprehended the

person who attacked our country.

Sure, we have gone into Iraq. We have spent about $200 billion. We

have seen about 6,000 or 7,000 of our soldiers injured. We have lost

well over 1,000 American lives. Yet the man who was responsible for

attacking us is a free man tonight, and he continues to be a danger to

us.

Mr. Speaker, it is true that in spite of all evidence

to the contrary and in spite of the report of the bipartisan 9/11

Commission that the Vice President continues to insist that there was a

connection between Iraq, al Qaeda, and the attack upon our country.

It is amazing to me that in spite of all of this evidence that the

Vice President would continue to say that. I mean, it is contrary to

every expert, every study, the 9/11 Commission. Even the President

himself has disassociated himself from that contention. And yet the

Vice President continues to make the accusation. Why did the Vice

President say something like that that has been so discredited?

Mr. Speaker, it takes strength and it takes

confidence to be willing to admit a mistake. And, quite frankly, we

have not heard the President or the Vice President admit any mistakes,

any mistakes. Anytime there is bad news coming out of Iraq, and it is

coming out on a daily basis, the word we get from the White House is,

we expected that.

Mr. Speaker, on one point, returning soldiers have

told me that Halliburton is literally importing Filipinos to do much of

the work in Iraq. As the gentleman said, the Iraqi people are

unemployed. They have no source of support for themselves and their

families. They are just unemployed with no incomes. And yet Halliburton

is importing Filipinos and workers from other parts of the world who

will provide cheap labor for them while the Iraqis go unemployed. That

is just one example of the terrible policy that this administration is

following right now.

Mr. Speaker, before the gentleman goes to his fourth

point, these no-go zones are made up of the largest cities in Iraq. The

largest cities in Iraq are no-go zones right now. The gentleman is

right. We are not going into those cities now. But the elections are

scheduled for the end of January next year. And there is every

intention that we are going to go into those cities before the Iraqi

elections. If they have the Iraqi elections and much of the country

cannot participate, it will be considered an invalid election. People

will not be able to accept it. So we know that the intention of this

Pentagon, President Bush and Secretary Rumsfeld, is to go into these

no-go zones before the end of January.

But they are not doing it now, and I think my friend has indicated

why we are not doing it now. We are not doing it now because it is

going to be a tough thing to do. We are 41 days in front of our

elections, and so basically we are letting these no-go zones fester.

Even members of the Taliban now are moving into some of these no-go

zones. So we have the terrorists, the insurgents, building up their

networks within these no-go zones, and when we do go in, it is going to

be terribly difficult to dislodge them, to overcome them and overtake

them. But every day that passes that they have these sanctuaries,

basically, they are able to increase their strength, to increase their

ability to resist once we do decide to go into these areas.

If the gentleman will yield, as I am standing here

listening to the two of you talk I have a chilling thought, and that

thought is this: In spite of all that has gone wrong, even today it

seems as if military decisions are being affected by political

considerations.

Now, I understand what a serious charge that is, that military

decisions would be affected or mandated or influenced by political

considerations. But why would we allow these no-go zones in Iraq to

remain no-go zones when we know that that cannot continue, that we have

got to change that situation before the end of January, if in fact the

Iraqi elections take place as planned, and the administration insists

that they will take place?

That means that at some period of time between now and the elections

in Iraq in January we are going to have to deal with these no-go zones.

And if it is true, and I believe it is, that as each day passes the

insurgents who are occupying these areas increase their strength,

increase their ability to resist our Armed Forces or the Iraqi forces

once they do go into those areas, then it leads me to the only

conclusion that I think is rational or logical, and that is that

military decisions are being influenced by political considerations,

namely the November 2 election in this country, and that is terribly

troubling.

I think the American people ought to understand what is going on

here, because it involves the well-being of our soldiers, and I think

it involves the credibility of our government as we reach out to the

world for partners and partnerships.

If my friend will yield, just one example of the

incompetence was the fact that our soldiers were sent into Iraq without

body armor. We hear a lot of talk in this Chamber about body armor. We

have heard a lot of accusations that somehow a particular person

running for President other than the President himself is responsible

for voting against body armor. But the fact is that initially, when our

troops went into battle, they were sent into battle without body armor.

Thousands of them were there without body armor.

I wrote Secretary Rumsfeld about that and asked him to give me a date

certain when they all would be well-equipped with this armor, because I

had heard from a young soldier, who happened to be a West Point

graduate, one of my constituents, he said, ``Congressman, my men are

wondering why they don't have body armor?''

The fact is that that decision was made to send our troops into

battle without body armor, and the war started months before the vote

on the $87 billion that is now being used to accuse others of depriving

our troops of this vital equipment. That is just one example. But we

also know that they were sent there without armored Humvees and in

insufficient numbers. These are examples that I would consider

incompetent leadership. Incompetent leadership. It continues to this

very day.

Now, the President was asked this past week how he could defend his

statements about how well things were going in Iraq in light of the

recent report from the intelligence community saying things were not

going well.

He answered this way. He said, ``Well, they laid out three

possibilities: One, things would be lousy; two, things would not be so

good; and things would be better.''

Well, ``things being better'' was not one of the possible outcomes,

as we heard from the intelligence community. The best that they said we

could expect was just more of the same, of what we have right now, and

the worst was out-and-out civil war within Iraq. There was no better

scenario.

The President seems incapable of just speaking forthrightly and in a

candid manner about the real situation to the American people. So we

hear this happy talk, and every day, more and more and more of our

soldiers are being lost.

Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman will yield, if we go

back and recall the circumstances surrounding that $87 billion,

remember when the President went on national television and announced

to the American people he was going to ask for an additional $87

billion, his approval rating fell like a rock, because the American

people were upset that the needs here at home were being so woefully

neglected, and here the President was, coming, asking for an additional

$87 billion.

So many of us thought that the fair thing to do was to take that

portion of the $87 billion that was going to Iraq for the rebuilding of

schools and clinics and roads and bridges in Iraq, and to make that

available as a loan that would be paid back to this country once Iraq

was stable and they had these huge oil sales which was going to make it

possible for them to repay that loan. And the White House said, no, no,

no. We will only make this money available as an out-and-out gift.

Yes, a give-away. So they went to Madrid to this so-

called donors' conference and they came back and they were trying to

convince us as a Congress and as the American people that all of these

other countries had ponied up, had given their fair share. And what did

we find out, as the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. Delahunt) has

said here, all of these countries that made monies available made them

available in the form of a loan. They will, in fact, at some point be

repaid for whatever they give, but not the good old USA. We gave our

money away, and now the President is criticizing those of us who fought

to have this given as a loan, implying, I guess, that somehow we did

not care about the troops. Which is, quite frankly, a little

outrageous.

Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier this evening, the only

people sacrificing for this war are the soldiers and the people who

love them. They are the only ones who are sacrificing, and that is sad.