Mr. Speaker, good evening. I am happy to be back here

with my colleagues to conduct another hour of Iraq Watch. We have been

meeting one day a week, one evening a week for 1 hour for about 8

months now, since the invasion of Iraq was conducted and problems

became apparent; and we have been trying to raise those questions here

on the floor, asking for answers, and trying to educate the American

public about the problems and challenges in Iraq. Since our last time

on the floor, there have been amazing developments that I would like to

talk about for a few minutes before turning to my colleagues and

engaging in a discussion with them.

The big news is that President Bush, at long last, has agreed to

appoint an independent commission to investigate the question of

weapons of mass destruction and their presence in Iraq and to try to

answer the unanswered questions about the weapons of mass destruction.

Now, on behalf of Iraq Watch, all I can say is, it is about time. We

have been individually and as a group calling for an independent

commission to investigate the controversy surrounding weapons of mass

destruction since the very beginning of the Iraq Watch 8 months ago. I

know, in particular, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. Strickland) and the

gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. Delahunt) never miss an opportunity

to call for such a commission to be appointed; and I have lent my voice

to that as well. Finally, the President has agreed that such a

commission is needed.

Well, let us take a quick review of the situation and find out why

President Bush now believes it is important for an independent

commission to investigate the weapons of mass destruction and the

performance of his administration, because I can tell my colleagues,

President Bush does not like independent commissions. I do not think he

did this lightly. I think he realizes that there is a huge question

here, and it is not a political question; it is a question of national

security. The issues that we are raising are not designed to raise

political controversy, but to deal with our national safety. These are

matters of national security.

Well, we all remember that President Bush and his administration

stated in the summer and fall of 2002 with complete certainty that

Saddam Hussein possessed weapons of mass destruction and those weapons

of mass destruction posed an imminent threat to America, to world

peace, and to our national safety. There was not any hedging; there was

not any doubt in the President's comments. There were not any

hesitations or uncertainties expressed by any of the policy-makers in

the Bush administration. They stated as fact that these weapons of mass

destruction existed. They identified on maps where the weapons of mass

destruction were located in Iraq. They even indicated how much those

weapons weighed. They told us, we have 500 pounds over here; we have

300 pounds over there.

Now comes a year and a half later, Dr. David Kay, the CIA's chief

weapons inspector in Iraq. And after working there for 7 or 8 months,

he has announced, upon his retirement from that job, that the weapons

of mass destruction do not exist and, in his opinion, did not exist

during 2002 or at the time we went to war in 2003.

Now, it is, by the way, undeniable, Mr. Speaker, that Saddam Hussein

had weapons of mass destruction in the 1980s. We know that. He used

them in murderous ways against his own civilians, innocent civilians,

the Kurds in Iraq. He also used them in murderous ways against the

citizens in Iran, during the Iraq-Iran War. But the question is not

whether he had them in the 1980s. The question is during the 1990s and

the period of international sanctions and international inspections,

did Hussein give up those weapons and did he have them at the time we

went to war in 2003. David Kay says no. He has concluded they did not

exist.

In addition to our general memory of how positive the President was,

I can share with the House, as I have before, that I attended a

briefing at the White House on October 2, 2002, 1 week before this

House voted on the war resolution. That briefing was for a bipartisan

group of Members, about 20 of us attended. It was one of several

briefings the White House conducted during that time. The briefing was

conducted in the Roosevelt Room of the White House by CIA Director

George Tenet and National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice. Ms. Rice

and Mr. Tenet told us with complete certainty that weapons of mass

destruction existed, that they believed Hussein was giving them to

terrorists, that there was a link between Hussein and al Qaeda and,

again, they knew where the weapons were. It was just a matter of

invading and uncovering them and seizing them. One of my colleagues

specifically asked George Tenet, Mr. Tenet, on a scale of 1 to 10, how

certain are you that Saddam Hussein has reconstituted his nuclear

weapons program? And Mr. Tenet answered, without hesitation, 10. He was

completely certain.

Well, we now know that information was simply incorrect. In fact, we

had a glimmer of the amount of exaggerations and deception when in the

spring of 2003 rank-and-file Members of the House were finally allowed

to see the classified intelligence reports from the fall of 2002, the

Defense Intelligence Agency report of September of 2002, that said, in

part, there was no credible evidence of a chemical stockpile of weapons

of mass destruction in Iraq, and the national intelligence estimate of

October of 2002 that was filled with uncertainties. That report said

that we think, according to the CIA, that Hussein has weapons of mass

destruction. We believe he may have this. We believe it is possible he

has that. Then we discovered in the spring of 2003, when we saw these

reports 6 months after they were made available to the White House that

the President, when he talked to the public, forgot about all that

uncertainty and told us, without a hesitation, that these weapons

existed.

Well, it seems clear to me, and it has for some time, that we were

led to war on half truths and deception and that America was misled and

the Congress was misled by these statements regarding weapons of mass

destruction.

Now, Saddam Hussein is in custody. Iraq and this country are better

off with him in custody. But the fact of the matter is, our challenges

in Iraq have been made much harder and much riskier because of the

arrogance, the unilateralism, and the cowboy diplomacy of this

administration.

Now, a few final comments about the commission, and I know my

colleagues are anxious to join in this discussion. The President has

finally called for an independent commission, something that all of us

have called for; and we have been joined by the gentleman from Hawaii

(Mr. Abercrombie), who has called for an independent commission as

well. There are questions remaining about how to set this up. One, of

course, is who will be the members, and this will be critically

important for the President to pick a bipartisan and independent group

of commission members.

The timetable for reporting is important. Obviously, this commission

should be given sufficient time to do

its job. I certainly hope, though, that there will not be any

artificial attempt made to delay the report until after the election to

protect anybody who may be embarrassed by its findings.

But most importantly of all is the scope of the commission's work. In

my view, it must do two fundamental things. Certainly, it must review

the accuracy of the intelligence-gathering and why our intelligence

agencies were wrong about the possession and existence of weapons of

mass destruction in Iraq. But secondly, and just as importantly, this

commission must review the use of that intelligence by the Bush

administration to delve into why this material was so badly stated;

why, when the Bush administration was told there were uncertainties

about the weapons, why did they tell Congress and the American people

that there was no uncertainty about the existence of those weapons.

This commission must delve into both the intelligence-gathering and the

use of that intelligence by the Bush administration.

Let me at this point turn now to the gentleman from Massachusetts

(Mr. Delahunt), who has been waiting patiently and who is a senior

member of the Committee on International Relations and a leader on this

issue.

Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman would yield, is the

gentleman from Hawaii (Mr. Abercrombie) suggesting that there is some

similarity between the behavior of the British 90 years ago and their

colonial ways and the behavior of America in Iraq?

Mr. Speaker, I welcome the questions of the gentleman,

but I hope he is not turning to me to give him some answers because I

cannot begin to answer these very legitimate questions he has raised

about what comes next, what does the Bush administration think will

happen at the end of June when we turn over civil authority at this

point to a completely unknown local or international or some form of

alternative government or group. These questions are important, and we

are nowhere close to having an answer.

I am afraid to ask.

Mr. Speaker, I agree with the gentleman from

Massachusetts (Mr. Delahunt) on that point. That is an excellent point,

and part of the problem we are having is that the President and the

Vice President continue to spin the issue of weapons of mass

destruction. The Vice President in the last couple of weeks still talks

about those trailers being the place where weapons of mass destruction

were being manufactured. David Kay laughs about that and says, no, they

were not.

They were perhaps making rocket fuel. More likely,

making helium for weather balloons, but they were not making weapons of

mass destruction. But the Vice President continues to suggest that that

was happening.

The President himself in the State of the Union address that the

gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. Delahunt) just referenced, in the

face of the absence of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, in my view,

continued to try to confuse the situation and fool the American people

by talking about the fact that Mr. Kay himself, who was in the process

of saying there were no weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, the

President quoted Mr. Kay as talking about weapons of mass destruction-

related program activities. And I do not have a clue what is a weapons

of mass destruction-related program activity.

At last, an answer.

Let me respond or add on to the comments of the

gentleman from Hawaii (Mr. Abercrombie) about the Iraqi scientist,

because Dr. Kay has also reported on what he believes may explain part

of the incredible inaccuracy of our intelligence work regarding the

weapons of mass destruction. He believes that some of those Iraqi

scientists that you referred to were actually conning Hussein; that

they were telling Hussein that they had had these programs; they needed

more money; they were on the verge of developing the weapons that this

murderous dictator was interested in developing. Hussein apparently

believed that con, and kept giving them money for their research and

for their development, and some of that money was skimmed off the top

through base corruption by these scientists and all the rest.

What is amazing is the suggestion from Dr. Kay that our intelligence

agencies fell for the con, too. We were conned by the con. We picked up

the communications of the Iraqi scientists to Hussein, and we believed

those communications, and so that is why we felt that the weapons of

mass destruction were well developed and in existence when, in fact,

they were not.