Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for the leadership

he has brought to this issue.

I think it is important to remind our audience, and we are again

joined by the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. Strickland), who is an original

member of this ad hoc group that describe ourselves as the Iraq Watch,

that it was 8 months ago that we began this effort. I think we are

entitled to congratulate ourselves tonight. Because back then, we asked

the congressional leadership and the President to depoliticize the

issue of intelligence surrounding weapons of mass destruction and the

allegations about links between al Qaeda and 9-11 on one side, and

Saddam Hussein on the next. Obviously, our words fell on deaf ears.

But now we are in an election year, and the President thinks it is a

good idea that he picks the members of this independent commission and

that its proceedings be held in secrecy, so that the American people

will not reach any conclusions prior to November's election.

Well, if he had heeded our advice and proceeded with an independent

commission back 8 months ago, I dare say, given the work of David Kay

and many others, that we would be well along the way; the American

people would be informed, the administration would be informed, the

House leadership would be informed, and we could be discussing these

issues in a way that had no political overtones to it. But, again, it

is this constant refusal to heed advice, to come in and have, if you

will, a discussion on how we move forward together.

Many of us on this side of the aisle voted against the resolution

because there did not appear to be a credible case, and we were right.

But now that we are there, let us go back and reexamine history. To

have a historical record that is accurate is important for generations

of Americans to come when this administration has enunciated a doctrine

of preemption, a doctrine of preemption, and has created, in terms of

the international order, a new norm that if you believe, you do not

have to prove; but if you suspect, if you think, if you guess, you can

launch a military strike against someone that you think may be a threat

to you. I fear not just for America in terms of where we go from this

point on; but situations that exist currently in the world, whether it

be in the Middle East, whether it be in south Asia, between Pakistan

and India, and all over the world, there are potentially volatile

situations where a country can point to this Bush doctrine of

preemption and launch a nuclear strike. That will have consequences for

all humankind and particularly for America, and we will have set the

norm. That is what disturbs me.

Mr. Speaker, what I find particularly ironic is the

debate now, whether the original preference of the United States in

terms of electing the interim council would be done by caucuses or

whether there would be a direct election. And it would appear that this

administration is somewhat confused, but it would appear that there

they are sticking to this caucus concept and rejecting the direct

election proposal put forth by a leading Shia cleric by the name of

Seestani for direct elections. The Iraqis, it would appear, believe

that they are capable of conducting an election. And we are saying no.

Well, I believe if there is one American principle, one American

value that we cherish here in this particular institution and all

across this land, it is one American, one vote. How about one Iraqi,

one vote, with appropriate qualifications?

Mr. Speaker, I was unaware of that. But maybe he had

done his reading in terms of American history and our fight and our

struggle to secure one vote for every person regardless of color,

religion, ethnicity, whatever; something that we as Americans are to be

proud of in exporting.

Mr. Speaker, is my colleague absolutely certain of

that? Because I was unaware of that. I find that incredulous.

Mr. Speaker, to corroborate the gentleman's point, and

I think it is important for my colleagues and for the people that may

be watching this conversation among us tonight, that the gentleman is

not speaking alone. That much of what he said was corroborated by the

United States Army in a 504-page internal Army history of this war

written by the Army's Combined Armed Senate at Fort Leavenworth in

Kansas. Much of what you said is part of that particular study. That

study was reported on today in the New York Times.

Let me just quote from part of that report in the New York Times:

``The first official Army history of the Iraq war reveals that American

forces were plagued by a morass of supply shortages, logistical

problems which senior Army officials played down at the time were much

worse than have been previously reported. Tank engines on warehouse

shelves in Kuwait with no truck drivers to take them north; broken down

trucks were scavenged for usable parts; artillery units cannibalized

parts from captured Iraqi guns to keep their Howitzers operating; Army

medics foraged medical supplies from combat hospitals.''

This comes from an Army report, not from a politician, whether that

politician be a Republican or a Democrat, speaking at a press

conference. This is the United States Army. The study goes on to note

that the strategy employed by the political leadership, Secretary

Rumsfeld is answerable for this, in his Deputy Under Secretary

Wolfowitz, and Assistant Secretary Fife and the entire crowd. The study

notes that ``the strategy of starting the war before all support troops

were in place taxed the post-war resources of local commanders who in

many cases were shifting back and forth between combat operations and

the task of civil services. Local commanders were torn between their

fights and providing resources, soldiers' time and logistics, to meet

civilian needs,'' the report concluded, ``partially due to the scarce

resources. As a result of the running start, there was not simply

enough to do both missions.''

Talk about a disaster that has resulted in untold sacrifice of

American soldiers, has set us back in terms of the reconstruction of

Iraq. All for what? Because we do know now, we do know now that

despite, despite what the White House did say, the threat from Iraq was

not imminent. Remember those words?

The White House spokesman Scott McClellan in July of this year,

``Iraq was the most dangerous threat of our time.'' His predecessor in

May of 2003 in response to a question whether the threat from Iraq was

imminent, his answer, ``Absolutely.'' Again, McClellan, the

spokesperson for President Bush in February of last year said, ``This

is about imminent threat.'' The Vice President himself on January of

last year, ``Iraq poses terrible threats to the civilized world.''

President Bush, himself, in November of 2002, ``The world is also

uniting to answer the unique and urgent threat posed by Iraq whose

dictator has already used weapons of mass destruction to kill

thousands.''

But now, what does the White House spokesperson say? ``Some in the

media have chosen to use the word `imminent.' Those were not words we

used.''

Give me a break, Mr. McClellan. You lose credibility by saying that.

Be honest, be honest. You were wrong. Admit it and restore confidence

in America and in the White House, not just for the benefit of the

American people, but for the benefit of American prestige in our role

in this world to enhance democracy in every corner of the planet.

Does the gentleman know what the CIA says?

Back about a week ago in the Miami Herald this is what

the CIA said in response to a question posed by the gentleman from

Hawaii (Mr. Abercrombie).

They said in the Miami Herald, in a commentary on the President's

State of the Union address, which would lead one to believe that things

were fine and that peace and order and democracy were just around the

corner, well, the CIA offices in Iraq, in the field, are warning that

the country may be on a path to civil war. And they are very, very

concerned and very, very disturbed.

Again, it is all about just be honest. The American people can deal

with the truth. We can have a debate that is respectful. We can address

problems and we can move forward together, but if you do not tell us

the truth, that is when we are in trouble.

Everybody laughs about it.

Neither does any other American have a clue. You talk

about gibberish.

If I can, we certainly know the gentleman is absolutely

correct. If we want to talk about weapons of mass destruction program-

related activities, let us go back to that point in time when the

current Secretary of State, Colin Powell, was the National Security

Adviser and when the current Vice President, Mr. Cheney, was the

Secretary of Defense.

What I find particularly fascinating is, as Dr. Condoleezza Rice just

said, if I can find the quote, she said just recently, he used weapons

of mass destruction, just as the gentleman indicates. The truth was

that we were transferring to him the computers and the ingredients

necessary to advance his nuclear weapons program. That happened.

We, the United States Government, during the 1980s under Reagan and

President George Herbert Walker Bush, were removing him from the

terrorist list, installing an embassy in Baghdad, providing

intelligence to Saddam Hussein in the war against Iran. And when it

came to that horrific incident in Chalabi where he used chemical

weapons against the Kurds who had aligned themselves with the Iranians,

there was a condemnation, let us call it lip service. And yet, when

this institution, this House and the United States Senate in 1989 and

1990 attempted to impose sanctions on the Saddam Hussein regime, you

know what the position of the administration was then, led by the

Secretary of Defense and the National Security Adviser? They killed the

bill. They killed the bill.

Now, if hypocrisy was a virtue--

Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, I think it is interesting the gentleman

talked about the former Secretary of the Treasury, and I think we all

respect his candor and honesty, and I think for many of us it certainly

is not surprising. I think probably, and I do not know whether our

audience is aware of this, but one starts to see a subtle change in the

position of some members of the administration.

For example, Secretary Powell was reported yesterday in the

Washington Post, he said he does not know now whether he would have

recommended an invasion of Iraq if he had been told it had no

stockpiles of banned weapons, even as he offered a broad defense of the

Bush administration's decision to go to war.

What we are going to start to see now is a shift in the language. We

are going to go from clearly there were weapons of mass destruction,

this is where they are, these are the quantities, and that is going to

go to the weapons of mass destruction program-related activities. Now

we are going to see attempts by senior administration officials to

rewrite history. But I think what is most important from this point on

is for those that are in denial, because they have I think almost a

psychological hold in terms of their belief, we should ask them to

accept reality. Let us move on, let us work together in a bipartisan,

bicameral basis and to go forward, understand where we failed in terms

of this policy, and see that at least the Iraqi people have an

opportunity for a democratic future, and as quickly as possible reduce

the exposure of American military personnel and the absolutely heavy

burden that the American taxpayers are bearing, with no help from

anybody else in the world.

And none to come. Remember that conference in Madrid?

That was all about loans. Our allies are loaning, expecting the money

back; but American taxpayers, we give it away. We give it away in this

body. That is what we do. We just shove it out the door. Well, that is

indeed unfortunate.