Mr. Speaker, we have come here tonight, my colleagues the

gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. Delahunt), the gentleman from Ohio

(Mr. Strickland) and others who may join us, as a part of our continued

obligation under the Iraq Watch to present a discussion and an honest

critique of the administration's policy in Iraq. My colleagues and I

have been engaged in this series of discussions now for several months,

and we have done this for one simple purpose. We do not intend to allow

the incredible commitment by

our armed services that are now engaged in Iraq to be forgotten on the

floor of the House of Representatives.

Too often, people are sent into combat and then forgotten, and what

the Federal Government did or did not do in sending them into combat is

given little discussion and little note, but tonight of all nights, we

think it is appropriate and vital for this chamber to discuss what this

Federal Government did and did not do to lead us into our current

predicament in Iraq. It is most appropriate for us to do this because

tonight we have the very sad duty to report, as now Americans know,

that we have lost 1,000 American lives in Iraq, a war started by a

President under the belief and statement that weapons of mass

destruction threatened the security of the United States.

Based on that statement made by the President from the chamber

standing behind me some time ago, over 1,000 Americans have lost their

lives, and those 1,000 Americans are from 49 States and members of

every political party. They are short and tall, rural and urban, and

they all served under the flag of the United States and did their duty

proudly.

We, on a bipartisan basis, honor them because, no matter what they

thought of their commander-in-chief's decision to go to war, they gave

their highest measure of devotion to their duty, and we honor it,

everyone in this chamber.

I would like to also not forget the men and women who tonight are

rebuilding their shattered bodies from injuries, over 7,000 people,

many of whom suffered very, very difficult injuries who tonight are

recovering in our hospitals across America, in the Mideast and in

Europe. Anyone who has talked to those soldiers and seen the incredible

courage in their eyes when they are sitting there with pins in their

legs and arms and missing limbs, and you ask them how they are doing

and they say I am doing fine, sir; and you ask them what their plans

are, and they say I want to get back to my unit as fast as I can;

anyone who has seen those young soldiers would be incredibly proud of

our people in Iraq.

But this does not reduce or obligation to hold the Federal Government

accountable for its numerous mistakes in Iraq. It heightens that

obligation to blow the whistle on the repeated, continued misjudgments,

misstatements, incompetence, negligence and carelessness that has led

to this situation in Iraq, and tonight we are going to discuss them.

I would like to, if I can, start this discussion with five rosy

projections that, unfortunately, we have suffered in Iraq as a result

of this administration's rosy projections. I just want to list these

quickly.

Rosy projection number 1: This administration, and in the persons of

the President, flew out to an aircraft carrier with a jaunty looking

flight suit, landed on the deck of the carrier, proclaimed mission

accomplished with a giant banner on the superstructure of that

carrier. Since the President told us mission accomplished, over 800

Americans have died in Iraq. The President's rosy projections were

sadly wrong, and there is an emptiness in households and families

across America as a result of that wrong rosy projection.

Number 2: The President told us that as soon as we could stand up a

new government, this new government would be embraced with the warmth

of the Iraqis, with rose petals not only at our feet but at the new

government's feet, and that this bearing up of support for the Iraqis

and their new flag would bring peace and milk and honey to Iraq. Since

this new government has been ``stood up,'' we have had an increase in

the number of Americans killed in Iraq. Another rosy projection by this

President that was flat wrong.

Number 3: The President told us by now we would have a secure Iraq,

beginning to be capable of having elections. Well, what did we read in

the newspapers yesterday? The fact is that huge swaths of Iraq under

this administration's policies have been given over to the Taliban and

their associates, the militias in Iraq. Fallujah, the place where these

folks desecrated the body of four contractors, that our proud marines

went in there to do battle, this administration has given up to a

militia that essentially is in cahoots with the Taliban and a

fundamentalist regime, and we have that now called a ``no-go zone.''

Same in Ramadi, same in Najaf, same in parts of Sadr City. The fact of

the matter is the President's policies have ceded huge parts of Iraq to

what he says is the enemy. Rosy projection number 3, that we have

essentially given up trying to disarm these militias and kicked the can

down the road where eventually our military people are going to have to

encounter these militias are now arming themselves and building

themselves up in these ``no-go zones.'' Rosy projection number 3 that

our people are paying for.

Number four: The President told us that Iraq would pay for this. You

recall the projection by Mr. Wolfowitz who came here and said that

Iraqi oil was going to pay for this. Sad joke on the American

taxpayers. We are now over $200 billion into it with hundreds of

billions of dollars to come, with no projection of how long it will be.

Wildly optimistic, and in fact, we find out that the money we have

appropriated cannot even be spent because of the lack of planning for

the post-conventional war situation in Iraq. Because of this

administration's lack of having a plan for the peace, only 2 percent of

the money we have appropriated has actually been spent in Iraq of the

$18 billion. They will get around to spending it, and U.S. taxpayers

will pay through the nose for it, but the fact that this administration

had such a rosy projection is going to cost us over hundreds of

billions of dollars to the American taxpayer. Rosy projection that was

wrong, number 4.

Number 5: The President implicitly told us that there would not be

war profiteering and gouging in Iraq in these hundreds of billions of

dollars of taxpayer money, but in fact, we found that Halliburton, this

corporation with incredible ties to this administration, has already

been subject to millions of dollars of cost overruns which they cannot

account for, that the Pentagon is now trying to get our money back for.

In fact, they have talked about withholding 15 percent of further

payments to Halliburton as a result of this lack of credibility to

American taxpayer dollars. Rosy projection number 5.

So we would like to say that this President's projections have been

accurate, but the sad fact is we stand here tonight with 1,000

Americans who have given their lives in Iraq. We have a continued tale

of failed administration policies in Iraq, and this Nation deserves

accountability for the people who have made these decisions in Iraq,

which have cost us so dearly in life and treasure.

In fact, when you look at this entire administration, which has

bungled this operation so badly, you cannot find a person who has

essentially been held accountable for their multiple failures. There

has not been essentially a person who has lost a vacation day or had

their little perks taken away or their corner office.

This administration has a response to the American people when they

are criticized. They simply say you are not an American if you

criticize this administration. We are here to say it is not only a duty

to criticize, a right to criticize this administration, it is a duty,

and we are fulfilling it.

Mr. Speaker, I was just going to offer an answer on how

long it was until they got body armor. It was too long. And it is

unfortunate that the same people that made that mistake are still

running the show in Iraq and not one of them has been held accountable

for this foul-up, and we are demanding accountability.

Mr. Speaker, I will now yield to the gentleman from Massachusetts

(Mr. Delahunt).

Mr. Speaker, I want to note one other thing that the

administration needs to take responsibility about. The President during

his speech during the Republican convention, which was quite a show,

and some of us found Zell Miller mildly entertaining, there was a lot

of discussion about Franklin Delano Roosevelt, and there was one thing

that I really respected about President Roosevelt, and that is on

December 8, 1941, after the Japanese had bombed Pearl Harbor, President

Roosevelt did not suggest we bomb China, he focused on the group that

attacked and killed thousands of Americans, which was the Japanese.

This President has not followed Franklin Delano Roosevelt's pattern.

Roosevelt said, let us attack the enemy that has attacked us, which in

our case was al Qaeda, a fundamentalist Islamic movement that this

President has spent the last 2 years trying to confuse the American

people, with some success, in confusing al Qaeda with Iraq, and he has

done the equivalent of invading China after September 11, and we have

suffered accordingly.

It is very important for us not to allow the power of propaganda to

overwhelm the power of reason, and we cannot allow, with 1,000

Americans dead in Iraq, America to forget that this President had tried

to whitewash the situation by calling the war in Iraq as the war on

terror when there is no credible evidence of connection of Iraq with

September 11, and the President and Vice President know it, and they

keep saying it anyway.

The independent 9/11 Commission reached that conclusion despite the

fact that the President and Vice President did everything they could to

thwart the creation of the 9/11 Commission and now accept its

recommendations enthusiastically.

The point the gentleman has made is the cost that we have

suffered in addition to this horrendous loss of life is that the real

war on terrorism has been injured by the war in Iraq, and I want to

talk about some of the ways that has happened.

Symptom number one of a failed war on terrorism: you do not finish

the job against the enemy that attacked you, and we have not finished

the job in Afghanistan which is the source of the attack of September

11. September 11 came from a group trained in the camps of Afghanistan;

and we appropriately, on a bipartisan basis, started a war in

Afghanistan because it was necessary, but now it is, in a way,

abandoned by this administration because this administration has not

given what we need in Afghanistan to finish the job, to build up a

meaningful stable government in Afghanistan. The very place that

attacked us has been put on the back burner.

Senator Graham the other day disclosed that a year before the Iraq

war started, General Franks or one of the generals told him that they

had started to move Predators that were being used in the hunt for

Osama bin Laden to get ready for the attack on Iraq. So we took our

resources against, if I can use the 1941 example, out of the war on

Japan and attacked Beijing.

I would like to add, Osama bin Laden is not only free

physically, he is free apparently from the interest of the President of

the United States who has not mentioned his name, as far as I can tell,

for about a year. The man that he promised us he would get dead or

alive, this President does not even allow his name to pass his lips

because it may distract some of the attention from Iraq. That is way

too free for my tastes.

I want to mention one other thing about why we have not been as

successful with al Qaeda as we should have been. Obviously, cutting off

the money of al Qaeda is extremely important. If you can kill the money

trail, you can dry up some of their attacks on us. We found out we have

more inspectors and investigators with the Department of the Treasury

tracking American tourists who go to Cuba than we do tracking the money

going to al Qaeda. We are spending over $200 billion a year in Iraq,

but we cannot fund enough people to find Osama bin Laden and really cut

off his money. We are more interested in Cuba and Iraq. That is a

distortion.

One other thing I want to mention. We have a tremendous threat in

this country, and the President is right about one thing, that there is

a real threat against this country. One of those threats is there are

20,000, in a sense, loose nuclear weapons from the former Soviet Union

that are not in secure locations tonight, that some terrorists could

get ahold of. But what have we done to try to increase our rate of

locking up that fissionable material so al Qaeda cannot get ahold of it

since September 11? What has this administration done? Essentially

nothing to improve our efforts to try to lock up that fissionable

material. They have not increased their appropriation, as far as I

know, a dime to get rid of this material that al Qaeda, we know, is

interested in using to attack us. Why not? They are spending $200

billion in Iraq to chase weapons of mass destruction that there were

zero weapons of mass destruction, zero nuclear weapons in Iraq. We know

there are 20,000 nuclear weapons that are running around the former

Soviet Union, some of which were locked up in a chicken shed with a

little lock on it you could break with bicycle lock busters, literally;

and this administration will not put more money into that effort to

lock up those loose nukes. This is a misprioritization.

Mr. Speaker, I would point out since the Republicans

wanted to show respect for Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Roosevelt in the

throes of World War II did not say, let us all enjoy a tax cut. He

said, let us tighten our belts, grow victory gardens, buy Liberty

Bonds, and get this job done. But this President is not willing to ask

Americans to make those sacrifices for reasons that we have to ask

ourselves why, but he will not do it.

And when we talk about the people whose lives are on the line in

Iraq, there is a draft already going on in that country. There is a

silent draft, and that silent draft is if one was in military service

at any time in the last 2 years or 20 years by the sum of what they

count, they are potentially going to haul them back in and send them to

Baghdad, and that is what they are doing. There is a silent draft going

on right now, and it is unfair to the families who had their lives

disrupted, who thought their military service was over. And thousands

of Americans are getting dragged off of their jobs and away from their

families this month because of the poor planning that went on.

I want to mention, just talking about the future if I can, as Laurel

and Hardy said, you know, this is a fine mess that we are in. But the

question is, what do we do now? Because we are in it, and we are in it

together. Republicans are in it, Democrats are in it, urban and rural,

we are all in this mess together, so what are we going to do?

Let me suggest that there are some things we need when it comes to a

leader of America right now to find a way to solve the problem in Iraq.

I would suggest there are three things we need in a leader right now,

in a President right now.

Number one, we need a President who can have the respect and good

working relationship with the rest of the world, to try to get the rest

of the world to pitch in and help in Iraq. We need someone who has not

burned his bridges with friends or potential allies, someone who has

not offended the rest of the world, someone who has not ended up

getting a 90 percent disapproval rating with some of our purported

allies on our policy in Iraq, someone who can really lead a world

alliance. We have to ask whether we have a President who is capable of

that right now.

The second thing we need is we need a President who is willing to

fire the boobs and incompetents who have made ridiculous decisions that

have cost thousands of American lives and injuries. We need somebody

who is

willing to clear the decks of the individuals who ought to be held

accountable for the lack of body armor, the lack of armor, the poor

planning, the decision now to let these militias go out and breed where

our people are going to suffer eventually when we have to face them.

These people need to go. We need a President who is not great friends

with these people and who will not fire them. I have to seriously

question whether we have a leader right now in the White House who is

capable of that.

The third thing we need is we need a President who is basically

willing to take a fresh approach in Iraq. We need a new strategy in

Iraq. We need someone who is truly willing to break with the past, try

new approaches, talk to different people, hire different staff, get new

intelligence and get new strategies in Iraq.

Unfortunately, this President has a quality of refusing to change, no

matter what the evidence is. The evidence be darned, he is going to

continue the route he chose.

That is not good enough right now for America. We need better and we

need a fresh approach. This country needs to ask whether we have a

leader in the White House who is capable of adopting a fresh approach

in Iraq. That is a serious question Americans will be asking this

November, and I hope it is something they chew on.

I yield to the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. Hoeffel).