Mr. Speaker, I concur with everything that my colleagues

have said this evening. For almost a year and a half, those of us

engaged in Iraq Watch have been coming here raising questions and

posing alternatives for our failed national policy.

The bottom line is, as the gentleman just said, we have lost our

national focus on the real threat, which has been and remains Osama bin

Laden and al Qaeda. We have allowed the Bush administration with its

obsession with Saddam Hussein to distract us from what has been the

real threat and obviously remains the real threat today.

We know the sordid history of misstatements and failed policies and

misleading comments by the President and his top advisors. They misled

us about the weapons of mass destruction. As the gentleman from

Washington (Mr. Inslee) said, they misled us about a nonexistent

connection about Saddam Hussein, al Qaeda and 9/11.

The President misled us about how he would use the military power

that he asked for in the fall of 2002. He said he would not use it

until he exhausted diplomatic options. He broke that promise. He said

he would not use it until he put together an international coalition

such as his father had done 13 years before. Broke that promise. And he

gave us a number of commitments to allow the international inspectors

once back in Iraq to conclude and complete their work, and he did not

allow them to finish their work before using this power.

The reality is while it is a good thing for Iraq that Saddam Hussein

is out of power because he certainly was a murderous tyrant, it has not

made America safer. This has reduced our status in the world and has

made the challenges and the risks of the war on terror more difficult

for America, not easier.

What really gripes me tonight, in addition to all of the things that

we have mentioned, is what now seems to be the use of our American

military in Iraq to suit the dictates of Iraqi domestic politics. We

have lost 150 brave American soldiers in defeating the Iraqi Army. It

took us 19 days, and our soldiers did everything we asked them to do

and fought bravely. We have lost 850 equally brave Americans in what

has turned out to be the occupation of Iraq, and I think a big reason

for that is the misuse of our troops.

Let me quickly quote from a Washington Post article dated August 24,

2004, with the title ``In Najaf, Iraqi Politics Dictate U.S. Tactics.''

The point of this article published a few weeks ago is that Acting

Prime Minister Allawi is deciding when American troops are used, when

they are held back as suits his purposes for the domestic Iraqi

political situation that he faces.

What enrages me is that the American politicians who

whip themselves up into a foaming rage over the notion that someday,

somehow, someway American troops might be under foreign generals'

command in a U.N. peacekeeping force or something of the kind are

completely silent when something much worse is happening here. Our

troops today in Iraq are not under foreign generals' command, they are

under the command of foreign politicians. It is outrageous. Let me read

from this article and yield back. I do not want to monopolize this

time. But in this Washington Post article, August 24, 2004, entitled

``In Najaf, Iraqi Politics Dictate U.S. Tactics,'' at one part it says

here in the article:

``If there is any doubt that the new Iraqi government is calling the

shots in this country, the supporting evidence is mounting daily in

Najaf. Here, on the order of interim Prime Minister Allawi, night raids

bolt forward or are halted, bombs fall from the sky or remain snuggled

beneath the wings of F-15s, howitzers roar or are silenced, and

ambitious combined arms operations are meticulously planned and then

shelved, only to be revived a day later when a shift in the political

winds has been detected.''

A quote from Captain Brian Ennesser, intelligence officer for the

First Cavalry's First Battalion, Fifth Regiment: ``This mission is like

Normandy. Only instead of the weather, we're waiting on the politics.''

One more quote and I will yield back. Later in the article:

``Since the U.S.-led occupation authority transferred power to the

Iraqis on June 28, the chain of command has kept its structure but

changed personnel.'' A quote from Major General Peter Chiarelli, who

commands the First Cavalry: ``It's civilian control of the military.

That's what our system's all about.'' But the article then says:

``Except now the civilians are not Americans. They are Iraqis. And we

are losing brave Americans because they are being put in the middle of

disputes between Allawi and Sadr. They are being used to push forward

domestic political agendas for this interim government that is

interested in holding onto its power.''

It is my view that we need to refocus on the war on terror and Osama

bin Laden and redeploy troops that are bogged down there. We have got

170,000 troops in the Iraqi theater, 140,000 in Iraq, 30,000 in Kuwait,

peacekeeping, border patrol, police work. We have got one-tenth of that

number, 17,000, in Pakistan and Afghanistan doing everything we ask

them to do, working bravely around the clock but clearly not enough of

a focus to get bin Laden and destroy al Qaeda.

We have lost our focus. We need to get our troops out of the midst of

this domestic strife in Iraq and get them back to bases. We cannot

abandon Iraq, but we do not have to be in daily patrol between these

warring factions trying to feather their own nests and pursue their own

domestic agendas. We can make sure that the country does not fall

without having our troops in daily combat because of the inability of

this administration to focus on what is really challenging this

country, which is the problem in Afghanistan and Pakistan posed by

Osama bin Laden and al Qaeda.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Washington (Mr.

Inslee). It has always been clear that we need to internationalize the

challenge in Iraq, and we need to ``Iraqatize'' the challenge in Iraq.

We need international support from what is happening. I do not believe

this President can do it. But from the first day we should have been

returning to the United Nations to do the reconstruction. We should

have turned to NATO and the Arab League nations for security. Those

countries are a lot closer to Iraq than we are and have a much bigger

stake than we do in a stable Iraq. But we have not done that. We have

done the occupation of Iraq with 90 percent of the troops being

American and 90 percent of the money being American, and we have not

yet stabilized that country.

Mr. Speaker, I agree with the gentleman. Clearly we

share the President's goals of creating a stable Iraq that can choose

its own government. But the policies that he has chosen and the

rigidity in which he has implemented those policies and the inability

to change course when the policies are failing are clearly leading us

to a disaster in Iraq, where our troops are in the middle of the

domestic political striving of competing ethnic and religious

interests, unable to stabilize the country because we are doing it

alone, because we do not have the international support that we need,

nor have we trained up the Iraqis that we fired from the Iraqi army and

fired from the Iraqi border patrol. We have not trained up Iraqis to do

the police work and the peacekeeping that they ought to be doing for

themselves.

The President continues to act with arrogance, with a cowboy

diplomacy and an unwillingness to admit error, compounded by the

outrages expressed on the campaign trail, the intentional efforts to

mislead Americans, trying to connect 9/11 with Hussein, which is a

bogus connection, and with the Vice President saying the other day,

outrageously, that if the voters make the wrong choice on November 2,

that will lead to more acts of terror against this country.

I do not know that I have ever heard a more outrageous or reckless

statement made by any leader of this country, unless it would be the

President's statement himself in the summer of 2003 that they should

``bring it on,'' and 800 Americans have died since the President said

that.