Mr. Speaker, as you know, and our friends know, we

have been engaged in a conversation for some months now with regard to

what we have come to term the Iraq Watch; and I was very pleased to

note that my good friend and esteemed colleague, the chairman of the

Committee on Armed Services, the gentleman from California (Mr.

Hunter), indicated in the last hour that he and other Members were

occupying, that they would be pleased at some point, perhaps in the

future, to work out an opportunity for a dialogue, not necessarily a

debate, but a conversation among friends with respect to Iraq and its

implications for the United States, perhaps even combining hours. I do

not know what the rules are precisely on that, and I do not ask for a

ruling on that right now, Mr. Speaker; but at some point we hope to be

able to do that, hopefully for the benefit of the membership and for

those members of the American public and others that may be tuning in

to our Special Orders.

For this evening's opportunity, however, I wanted to begin our

discussion tonight with some references and observations over the so-

called handover of sovereignty. I think, Mr. Speaker, you might agree

that with respect to Iraq, and unfortunately not only Iraq, there tends

to be opportunities for the media in particular to seize on certain

phrases. They become almost phrases of art. These phrases then

substitute for a whole panoply of analysis that might otherwise

usefully take place.

In this instance, the phrase that I am referring to is the so-called

``handover of sovereignty.'' Handover of sovereignty, what that means

is not clear to me at this stage.

What I did observe during our break was a ceremony which took place

under very, very strained circumstances. The television news was

suddenly filled with the ominous music, the drumbeats, the portentous

rhythms that seem to indicate that something of spectacular import is

about to happen. Breaking news. Stentorian voices, a sound, and then

suddenly we are told, well, we are going to go to the handover of

sovereignty in Iraq. It is to take place in secret. It is to take place

with a pool reporter there, apparently a pool camera. It is in some

secret room somewhere in the green zone, presumably, I guess, in one of

the palaces, or what are referred to as palaces, in Baghdad; and,

suddenly, there is Ambassador Bremer and some folks there with

handshakes and pieces of paper passed back and forth. No real idea of

what it is all about other than smiles and handshakes all around.

And suddenly sovereignty ostensibly has been transferred or handed

over. That it took place in secret, that it took place ostensibly to

prevent terrorist activity from disrupting it probably speaks more

about what the handover was actually all about and whether or not the

word ``sovereignty'' might properly apply.

In both instances, I think not. There was no handover of sovereignty.

How can there be sovereignty when you do not control your armed forces,

when the first pronouncements of your ostensibly sovereign government

involve the possibility of imposing martial law on your own people and

indications that the governing authority, that is to say the Coalition

Provisional Authority under Mr. Bremer, still absent him in person, is

going to be in charge of the military activities, presumably, according

to this handover of sovereignty ceremony, under some kind of group

discussion terminology.

Again, I fail to understand exactly how this ``partnership,'' which

was referred to between the so-called sovereign Government of Iraq and

the Government of the United States through its military, is supposed

to take place.

It is unclear to me that the questions that I asked of Assistant

Secretary of Defense Wolfowitz in our Committee on Armed Services

hearings, unclear to me whether these questions were answered. I simply

said, ``Who is in charge? Who has the authority?'' And what I got was

the usual dissembling and allusions to the idea of group discussions

taking place. I am not quite sure how one responds to military

situations in the arena of group discussions, but I suppose it is

possible.

My own thought at that time was, and I said at that time and repeat

again tonight, that my perception was that at the turnover of

sovereignty, at least as best I was able to understand that term, the

American military would be set adrift on a desert sea and would find

itself in a situation of being the first responders in an Iraqi crisis

and that we would be uncertain as to who exactly was issuing the orders

and under what circumstances they would be obeyed.

This constitutes, for me, a crisis of another character, a crisis for

us to answer; and in that context it is clear to me that the handover

of sovereignty amounts to little more than a propaganda device meant to

try to distance the political consequences and implications of our

occupation from the political realities as the election approaches.

Obviously, people will have to make their own minds up on that score;

but in relation to that then, among the first pronouncements of this

sovereign government was that under consideration was a possible policy

of amnesty and that the amnesty would extend to those people who had

murdered American troops, those people who had been involved in the

insurgency that has taken place since the hostilities or major

hostilities were pronounced at an end, i.e., mission accomplished by

Mr. Bush some time ago on the infamous aircraft carrier stunt.

And subsequent to that, obviously this insurgency, again, this is a

term that has been adopted by the media uncritically, has resulted in

numerous deaths and woundings. Most members of, certainly, the

Committee on Armed Services and other Members of the House of

Representatives and members of the subcommittees of the other body have

traveled both in their districts and here in Washington and in Germany

to hospital situations where we have been able to speak with and,

hopefully, bring some measure of comfort and support to members of the

military who have been wounded, members of the military and others,

including civilian employees. But all that has taken place since this

pronouncement that the war was essentially over, that the major

activities surrounding the invasion was over; and now we find that this

sovereign government is contemplating offering amnesty to those people.

Now, if that is in fact what this has come to, I think the

implications and consequences are serious indeed. There is no question

in my mind that there will be some very serious dialogue taking place

in this Nation if that is what this was all about, the opportunity for

a government that has come into being solely as a result of the

activities of the United States of America subsequent to the invasion,

including and subsequent to the invasion of Iraq; and now we find a

general amnesty being contemplated.

That was never discussed, to my knowledge, with any members of the

Committee on Armed Services. It was never discussed, to my knowledge,

with members of the subcommittees of Congress generally as to whether

or not that was something that we could abide. One would think that at

a minimum this sovereign government in Iraq would have the courtesy, if

only out of respect for those who have died and those who have been

wounded on their behalf, to at least engage in some form of a dialogue

with the United States in regard to that possible amnesty.

I see my friend from Washington is about to ask for the floor, and I

would be happy to yield to him.

Mr. Speaker, reclaiming the time, on that note of

our analysis of what the domestic questions are that need to be

answered in Iraq, it is probably appropriate that the gentleman from

Ohio (Mr. Strickland) comes to us at this time, because if anybody is

in the heartland of where domestic issues are in the forefront, I would

say that it is the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. Strickland), his district

and his State; and I yield to the gentleman.

Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman will yield, because

just before I came back, let me give my colleagues something so that it

is not abstract. I will tell my colleagues exactly what I had to deal

with and what came up while we were away on our holiday.

My staff representing my delegation was briefed by Major General Lee,

the adjutant general of the State of Hawaii, on the situation of the

29th Brigade, Hawaii Army National Guard. The Secretary of Defense and

the Secretary of the Army approved the alert of the 29th Brigade for

deployment to Iraq. Earlier indications were, of course, that the 29th

would be deployed to Afghanistan; but the situation on the ground in

Iraq now requires additional soldiers from the 120,000 now there, and

the enhanced 29th Brigade is needed.

Now, this is happening all across the country; and if anybody thinks

for a second that the 5,000 or 6,000 that are going to be involved in

this current recall-up, involuntary call-up is going to solve it, I

think they are dreaming.

The 29th is one of the two remaining National Guard brigades not yet

activated. It will perform reinforcing missions.

Remember when I indicated here before that when this so-called

sovereignty occurred, the United States military would be set adrift on

a desert sea.

They will perform reinforcing missions, whatever in God's name that

means. The expected deployment will be 12 months. The brigade will have

to travel off-island to train up, because the normal training entity,

the 25th division, of course, is now deployed itself. The brigade may

go to Fort Bliss, et cetera; expect the deployment to Iraq to take

place shortly.

Then what do we have to do? The adjutant general then had to brief

all of the mayors that once the alert notice was released in

Washington, we had to then discuss what the impact would be on homeland

defense and natural disaster impacts back in Hawaii, because the Guard

normally is going to address those situations. The National Guard is,

of course, the primary backup to civilian authority. Now we are going

to have to rely on the Air National Guard since most of the Army

National Guard is going to be deployed. Now, this is just in Hawaii.

Now, we can imagine what is taking place elsewhere all around the

country? Part of our problem area in Hawaii is that the police and fire

departments are going to be adversely affected because a major portion

of the Army guard are police officers and firefighters and teachers. So

there will be about 2,500 soldiers from Hawaii and about 3,500 coming

from American Samoa, Guam, and California. Now, that is just one

instance; and that is the reality.

I want to conclude by saying the impacts on this are considerable,

because the employers, whether they are public employers or private

employers, have to take into account the absence of these folks at this

particular time. What is happening right now is we are denying what the

realities of the necessities for troops are in Iraq and Afghanistan and

are masking it over with Guard and Reserve deployments; and we are

going to have to pay a fearful price for that.

I yield to the gentleman from Washington.

The gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. Delahunt) has

to his immediate left what amounts to a poster, a picture on the cover

of Newsweek, ``How Dick Cheney Sold the War'' is the overall title. And

in that context I would daresay the answer to the gentleman's

observations and questions are that unless there is a change in the

leadership that is unlikely to occur. His questions will not be

answered except in the negative. His observations will continue,

because that gentleman whose picture appears there again to the left of

the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. Delahunt) is the same gentleman

whose company and associated companies are the administration, are the

ones that are in charge of helping to put this infrastructure together,

that is being defended by the American troops.

Yet, as a story recently in the Washington Post points out, and I

read the headline to you, a story about Ariana Cha appearing July 1,

``Underclass of Workers Created in Iraq, Many Foreign Laborers Receive

Inferior Pay, Food and Shelter.''

It may come as a shock not to members of Iraq Watch, but it may come

as a shock to the American taxpayer and perhaps some of our American

colleagues that what construction is taking place in Iraq is taking

place under the auspices of American companies, many of whom receive

single source contracts for hundreds of millions of dollars, who are

not even hiring Iraqis, who may be hiring some Americans but are, in

fact, bringing in wage slaves from the rest of the world and then not

even paying them, cheating them at the same time. Not only are the

American taxpayers being cheated by American companies but American

workers and Iraqi workers are being cheated.

Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman will yield, I will

elucidate a bit more on that.

In the story that I indicated I have that I was referring to, the

Underclass of Workers Created in Iraq, the opening sentence is, ``The

war in Iraq has been a windfall for Kellogg Brown Root, Inc., the

company that has a multi-million dollar contract to provide support

services for U.S. troops.'' ``KBR, a subsidiary of Halliburton

Corporation,'' came to employ Indian workers, from India, that is to

say, not Native American workers, ``through 5 levels of subcontractors

and employment

agents. The company, which employs 30,000 workers from 38 countries in

support of the U.S. military, said it had been unaware of the workers'

concerns until recently.''

This is the kind of thing, Kellogg Brown, Halliburton, is always

unaware of, workers problems, because they are too busy having their

accountants going to work on the excessive profits they are making.

It brings to mind the work that was done by one Senator Harry Truman

when, during World War II, he had his committee on a bipartisan basis

looking into the question of excessive profit-making from World War II.

This is not something that is invented for this time and place by

members of the Democratic Party. This is something that was headed up

by a Democratic Senator, who was in charge in the United States Senate,

on a bipartisan basis, to see to it that profiteering does not take

place at the expense of the American soldiers or the expense of the

American taxpayer.

Mr. Speaker, I believe we are down to our last

minute or so. I do want to indicate to members of Iraq Watch that are

here tonight that the chairman of the Committee on Armed Services in

the previous hour indicated that he and perhaps other Members might be

interested in having a dialogue with us and perhaps even combining

hours, if that is acceptable under the House rules, perhaps this week

or as soon as possible. And if it is okay with everybody, I wanted to

pursue that, and I have indicated to the Speaker as we began the hour

that that was contemplated and we will try to pursue that with the

leadership.

Mr. Speaker, I believe we have come to essentially the end of our

hour.