Mr. Speaker, I come to the House floor today as part of

the ongoing effort of myself and some of my colleagues in an endeavor

we style the Iraq Watch. The Iraq Watch is a group of Members who are

committed to the principle that we should not forget the Iraq war, a

war started based on false information and based on the principle that

Members of Congress owe it to the American citizens to continue our

inquiry, to continue our critique, continue to review the operations of

the administration in the initiation and the prosecution of the efforts

in Iraq.

We do so because we have a heartfelt and deep belief that we owe this

to our troops in the field who are performing with valor and

distinction in Iraq; we owe it to American citizens whose sons and

daughters and wives and husbands have been called away to Iraq; we owe

it to those who believe that the prosecution of war should not result

in the reduction of American civil liberties; and we do it in the name

of those who believe that even during the fear and anxiety caused by

war that we still as citizens must demand our elected officials

recognize and respect basic matters of American democracy.

In these issues, the effort we have been involved with for over a

year now about once every couple of weeks, we believe that the

administration regrettably has fallen very, very short of what American

citizens ought to demand of their Federal Government. So today, in a

continuing series of the Iraq Watch, we intend to talk about several

aspects leading up to the war and a matter that has now become of very

great public interest.

If I may note, it is with great sadness I note the passing of an

American Marine today in operations in Iraq, to add that proud Marine

to the names of over 1,750 Americans who have lost their lives in Iraq,

the over 13,000 Americans who have had very serious injuries in Iraq

and to those families who will not have their family members coming

home. I know every Member of this Chamber of both parties, our

thoughts, prayers and compassion are with every one of those families.

It is in part because of their continuing sacrifice in Iraq that we

feel very strongly that Members of the House of Representatives have an

obligation, a duty not to just let things slide by, to let this

administration just sort of pass by unchallenged and uncriticized in

the prosecution of this war. We believe this Chamber, which is the

people's House, has an obligation to blow the whistle when things are

done wrong, to force the administration to fess up to mistakes they

have made, and to hopefully get back on track in this Nation where we

are seriously off track at the moment.

What I would like to talk about in Iraq Watch today is a very serious

issue that resulted in part on the initiation of this war, and that is

that leading up to this war, the administration, the President of the

United States, exercised their best efforts to convince Americans that

Iraq had or was very close to developing a nuclear capacity and that

this was a primary rationale for the President of the initiation of the

war in Iraq.

Indeed, in the President's State of the Union address standing right

behind me in this Chamber, the President of the United States addressed

the joint session of Congress, the Supreme Court, the Joint Chiefs,

members of the Cabinet, and most importantly the American people; and

he told the American people that our intelligence services had learned

that Iraq had in fact obtained what is called uranium yellow cake, and

he told the American people that this was well established. This yellow

cake is a mineral from which uranium fissionable material can be

developed, it is a precursor to an atomic weapon, and its acquisition

would be of concern to the American people.

The President told the American people that this was a fact, that

there was no doubt about this fact and that as a result of that, he led

this Nation, against many of our positions against the war, myself

included, in a war based on what turned out to be false information. We

know it is false information for two reasons: one, because we have now

gone through the most extensive search for weapons of mass destruction

in human history in Iraq and found zero, zero yellow cake, zero

precursors to nuclear weapons, zero triggering devices for nuclear

weapons, zero indication that the things the President had told us were

fact, in fact, turned out to be falsehoods and a war has resulted and

1,700 of our sons and daughters have paid the ultimate sacrifice in the

sands of Iraq and that is continuing.

We had an earlier notice that this was false. The earlier notice we

had was because the Central Intelligence Agency had concerns about this

issue. Before the President's State of the Union address, they had

received some suggestions that this was not fact and in fact was

hyperbole at best and in fact that this claim about yellow cake may

have been false.

So they dispatched a gentleman who had previously served with

distinction in the Foreign Service, a gentleman named Joe Wilson, to

Niger from which this yellow cake was supposedly obtained by Saddam

Hussein, this brutal thug, this dictator who had caused so much damage

in the world; and Joe Wilson, continuing in many of his patriotic

duties, went to Niger to investigate this claim. What Mr. Wilson found

was that this claim was, in laymen's terms, bogus. He came back to the

United States and he reported to the agency that in fact this was a

fraudulent claim, there was not a basis for it, it was highly unlikely

that any such transaction took place and highly unlikely that Saddam

Hussein had obtained yellow cake. He issued a written report in that

regard, or a written report was generated from his report.

Yet despite the fact that an agent dispatched by our government went

to Niger, the scene of this alleged crime, and reported back that this

was a falsehood, the President of the United States told the American

people that this was one basis that we had to send our sons and

daughters into mortal combat in Iraq; and it was flat, plain false.

Why did that happen? Before I tell you a little bit about the story

that occurred after that, I want to tell you just a little bit about

Joe Wilson. Joe Wilson has served with distinction in the State

Department. Joe Wilson is a guy who does not fit the mold of a person

with sort of a pinstriped suit. He is a foreign diplomat who, to use

the vernacular in the main street, has guts. Joe Wilson was the last

American

State Department official out of Iraq before the Persian Gulf War; and

he was responsible, according to the first President Bush who honored

him for his work leading up to the first Persian Gulf war when he was

stationed in Baghdad, he was honored for helping save scores of

Americans to get them out of Baghdad before the first Persian Gulf war

started because, as you recall, Saddam Hussein had threatened

Americans, to kill them when the war started when they were still in

Baghdad.

Saddam Hussein essentially threatened with death anyone who helped

Americans get out of Baghdad before the first Persian Gulf war. Joe

Wilson, who was sort of our agent in charge of the embassy in Baghdad

then, went down and held a press conference with a rope around his neck

and said, you can come get me first, Saddam, because I am taking my

people home. That is exactly what he did. He faced down that brutal

dictator at the cost potentially of his own life to help American

lives.

It was interesting. I just met a woman by accident 2 weeks ago who

served in the Foreign Service who told me that Joe once went, and just

before the war, to take care of some children who had been moved back

to Iraq from the United States, to try to save them before the war

started at great risk to his own life. Joe Wilson is a guy with guts

who stood up for American lives and did it when he went to Niger to

report on this yellow cake, who reported accurately, who served his

country; and the President of the United States, after he gave him the

truth, got up, stood right there and told the American people that

there was yellow cake from Niger and it was false. Joe Wilson is

someone we owe a debt of gratitude to.

What has happened to Joe Wilson since he told the truth about the

President's war in Iraq? Did this administration give accolades to this

Joe Wilson the way the first President Bush did? No. Did they call him

up and thank him for pointing out this error in the State of the Union

address? No. Was a letter sent by the President of the United States to

thank him for his courage in standing up to Saddam Hussein like the

first President Bush did? No. Did the President of the United States or

the State Department or Scott McClellan or anyone else thank Joe Wilson

for his contribution for telling the truth to the American people? No.

What did this administration do to this citizen who shared the truth

with the American people? It is a sad story, but I am going to share it

with you and you know it. What they did was to go after his wife to try

to damage her, to hurt her career, to punish Joe Wilson for pointing

out the truth. We should expect any administration, Democrat,

Republican or whatever party, to punish lies, not to punish the truth.

But this administration punished a truth-teller and frankly an

American, maybe hero is too strong, but I think it approaches, a guy

who showed some real courage under fire in Baghdad once before and in

Niger a second time and they punished him. They punished him. They

could not get to him, so they went after his wife.

I do not know what is a lower thing to do under the code of the West

in American Western Civilization, to go after a truth-teller's wife, to

punish them when he has told the truth and spoken the truth to power.

It is difficult to speak truth to power and Joe Wilson did it, and

look at what he got as a result. What he got was essentially an outing

of his wife who news reports suggest worked for the Central

Intelligence Agency as a covert agent, an agent undercover, and what he

got were press reports because of an administration we now know leaks

intentional leaks to the media to disclose that Joe Wilson's wife

worked for the Central Intelligence Agency.

What a ``thank you'' to an American who did something at the request

of this administration. What a great note of appreciation to

essentially, number one, destroy his wife's career because once one is

outed in the CIA, of course, they cannot be a covert agent anymore,

number one; number two, potentially jeopardize her safety when she has

been a covert agent working on weapons of mass destruction issues;

number three, jeopardize the people whom she worked with who now could

be suspect in her covert operations; and, number four, damage the

national security of the United States by compromising a CIA agent,

which this administration did.

Now, who did this in this administration? There has been some

suggestion about that. There has been some suggestion that one, at

least of the administration people who did this, is the Deputy Chief of

Staff of the White House, and that Deputy Chief of Staff, when

questions were raised a long time ago about that, about whether the

Deputy Chief of Staff had, in fact, disclosed this information, let us

ask as Americans whether this administration upheld its obligation to

us to tell the truth. We elect the President of the United States. It

is an exalted and important position, but they do work for us, and they

owe us the obligation of truth in matters of national security.

Let us find out what the President's officials and the administration

officials told Americans about this subject in the last several years,

whether the Deputy Chief of the White House was responsible for or

involved in any way in this issue. We have a briefing on July 22, 2003,

a briefing where Scott McClellan, who is the press secretary for the

President, on July 22, 2003, in the White House, a question was asked:

``Scott, has there ever been an attempt or effort on the part of anyone

here at the White House to discredit the reputations or reporting of

former Ambassador Joe Wilson, his wife, or ABC correspondent Jeffrey

Kofman?''

McClellan: ``John, I think I answered that yesterday. That is not the

way that this White House operates. That's not the way the President

operates . . . No one would be authorized to do that within this White

House. That is simply not the way we operate, and that's simply not the

way the President operates.''

We would like the administration not to operate that, to leak

information about CIA agents, to punish somebody who told the truth. We

will see a little later in this conversation whether they did.

July 23, 2003, answer by Mr. McClellan, when asked if Karl Rove did

that, Mr. McClellan said, ``I haven't heard that. That's just totally

ridiculous. But we've already addressed this issue. I just said, it's

totally ridiculous.''

We go on to an interview with Mr. Rove on September 6, 2003, Andrea

Owen of ABC asked Mr. Rove, ``Did you have any knowledge or did you

leak the name of a CIA agent to the press?''

Rove: ``No.''

September 29, 2003, again to Mr. McClellan: ``Has the President

either asked Karl Rove to assure him that he had nothing to do with

this, or did Karl Rove go to the President to assure him that he . . .

''

McClellan: ``I don't think he needs that. I think I've spoken clearly

to this publicly . . . I've just said there's no truth to it.''

Question: ``Yes. But I'm just wondering if there was a conversation

between Karl Rove and the President or if he just talked to you and

you're here at this . . . ''

McClellan. ``He wasn't involved. The President knows he wasn't

involved.''

Question: ``How does he know that?''

McClellan. ``The President knows.''

We now have at least four instances where the President of the United

States, through his spokesperson, has told us that the Deputy Chief of

Staff was not involved in any way, in any way, at disclosing this

information to destroy a CIA agent's career. But it is not just four

times.

On September 29, 2003, question to Mr. McClellan: ``Weeks ago, when

you were first asked whether Mr. Rove had the conversation with Robert

Novak that produced the column, you dismissed it as ridiculous. And I

wanted just to make sure, at that time, had you talked to Karl?''

Answer by McClellan: ``I've made it very clear from the beginning

that it is totally ridiculous. I've known Karl for a long time, and I

didn't even need to go ask Karl because I know the kind of person that

he is, and he is someone that is committed to the highest standards of

conduct.''

A question to the President. Essentially people are starting to ask

what will the President do when he finds out who leaked this

information. Well, let us find out what the President said he would do.

On September 30, 2003, question: ``Yesterday we were told that Karl

Rove had no role in it . . . ''

The President: ``Yes.''

Question: ``Have you talked to Karl and do you have confidence in him

. . .''

The President: ``Listen, I know of nobody--I don't know of anybody in

my administration who leaked classified information. If somebody did

leak classified information, I'd like to know it, and we'll take the

appropriate action.''

October 1, McClellan: ``The President doesn't condone the activity

that you're suggesting, absolutely he does not.''

October 7, and I will skip the question for a moment. McClellan: ``I

spoke with those individuals, as I pointed out, and those individuals

assured me that they were not involved in this.'' And that included

Karl Rove, Elliot Abrams, and Lewis Libby. ``And that's where it

stands.''

Question: ``So none of them told any reporter that Valerie Plame

worked for the CIA?''

McClellan: ``They assured me that they were not involved in this.''

So the President subsequently said he would do what he should do if

he found someone was involved in any way in leaking information. He

said he would fire them. And when he was in Europe last week, when he

was asked what he would do if he found that out, when asked if he would

fire them, he said yes. So we have this situation where we now find,

through hard evidence admitted by the lawyer for the Deputy Chief of

Staff, that, in fact, Mr. Rove told Mr. Cooper, a news reporter, that,

in fact, he told him that Joe Wilson's wife worked through for the

Central Intelligence Agency.

And for 2 years now, the official position of the President of the

United States telling the American people has said, My Deputy Chief of

Staff had nothing to do with this, never mentioned it, never leaked a

word, never hushed it, never gave an inclination about it, totally

ridiculous. And now we know the sordid truth. And it is sordid. It is

sad. We should be talking about some other things here rather than

this. But we believe that the truth is important to the American

people.

Americans deserve the truth. They deserve not to have an

administration to punish Americans who stand up against power, and that

is what they did.

We now find phase one a failure of the administration to hush this up

and bury this story. They denied it for 2 years. They said it was

ridiculous for 2 years. They tried to suppress this information for 2

years. They refused to be candid with the American people for 2 years,

and that approach has failed. So what approach are they now using to

try to wiggle out from this most terrible abuse of our national

security? Let us go through their sort of defenses now.

By the way, it is interesting the White House now refuses to comment

on this. That has not stopped the majority party talk machine from

launching an all-out offensive against Mr. Wilson today. We can read--

they're still defaming Mr. Wilson today. They still have not given up

thinking that if they can destroy Mr. Wilson that we will forget about

the falsehood that the President used in starting this war. We are not

going to forget because this really is not about Mr. Wilson. It is

about our sons and daughters in Iraq. And it is about American

democracy and our right to have the President tell us the truth. And we

are not going to forget.

So let us see what strategies they are using now rather than just

suppressing the truth. They are using the strategy that Mr. Rove did

not use the name Valerie Plame. All he said was it was Joe Wilson's

wife who worked at the Central Intelligence Agency; therefore, they

think no harm, no foul. Whom do the Members think they are identifying

if not Valerie Plame? Unless Karl Rove thought that Joe Wilson was a

polygamist, had ten wives so we could not tell which one it was, it is

pretty clear whom he was identifying.

Just like I started this Special Order today and I made reference to

the Deputy Chief of Staff at the White House, everyone knew whom I was

talking about. I did not use his name, but we know who it was. That dog

just will not hunt. It is embarrassing. It is embarrassing to try to

fall back on that as some excuse for violating the security laws of the

United States. So that one will not work.

Second, they argued that, well, it was unintentional, did not really

intend to do this. That might be because we all make mistakes, we all

make misstatements, we all misspeak on occasion, myself included.

Perhaps we should just forgive and forget that. Except for one thing.

It is clear it was not. It is clear it was not a simple accident. The

reason we know it was not a simple accident is for 2 years they covered

up the truth of what happened. When people act guilty and suppress the

truth, frequently it means they were guilty. And this was not innocent

conduct where for 2 years the White House was saying it was ridiculous

that Karl Rove would be involved in this, ridiculous. I actually think

it is ridiculous now that they are not taking responsibility and being

accountable. We should not have to be arguing about this right now.

They say that they were just explaining, they were just explaining

how Mr. Wilson happened to be in Niger. Mr. Rove could have just

explained very easily by saying some people close to Mr. Wilson knew

him and wanted to send him to Niger. That could have preserved the

cover of this CIA agent, and there would have been no problem.

So what we are seeing is a collapse of excuses. This is a collapse of

a fabricated effort to protect the Deputy Chief of Staff, which I

understand. The Deputy Chief of Staff has been a loyal lieutenant and

adviser to the President of the United States, and we can all, to some

degree, respect loyalty. But when it comes down to a situation where

the President is forced, through his spokesperson, to continue to not

tell the truth to the American people, as it has happened here, it is

unhealthy for the administration. It is unhealthy for America, and this

boil needs to get lanced. It needs to get resolved. We cannot go on

with this cloud hanging over the country. It needs resolution.

That is why in the next few days, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr.

Holt) and myself and other Members will offer a resolution of inquiry

calling on the U.S. House of Representatives to get to the bottom of

what happened in this situation. And this is a very simple thing that

will simply request, actually require, the administration to provide

answers to the American people of what happened here once and for all.

We need to get this resolved and behind us. We need to find a way, a

bipartisan way, to bring our troops home; to find some way to leave

Iraq a stable place and bring our troops home. And we need to be

involved in a bipartisan attempt to do this rather than arguing about

this situation.

But until the administration is candid with the American people and

we know why an administration punished an American citizen for, number

one, going to Niger as requested by the CIA; telling the truth to the

administration, number two; three, having the courage to tell the

public about it after the President stated a falsehood during his State

of the Union address; and fourth, refusing to be intimidated, and I

respect people who are not intimidated by power.

Joe Wilson is not intimidated by power. He was not intimidated in

Baghdad, and he is not intimidated now. We will not be intimidated to

get to the bottom of this sordid affair. That is why we hope that on a

bipartisan basis we will pass a resolution of inquiry calling to get

answers to what happened in this sorry situation. Americans deserve it.

It will help us move forward to get to the issues that we need to do.

Now, let me also talk about why perhaps, today and the last 2 days,

if you have happened to watch the press conferences at the White House,

you have noticed Mr. McClellan has been besieged by people who wanted

to provide Americans the truth as we now know it about what actually

happened here. Now, after telling us for 2 years, being quite willing

to talk about this, saying this is ridiculous, this was just a fishing

expedition, and that we should not bother with those little people over

there in the corner who want to know the truth about this, now, all of

a sudden, Mr. McClellan does not want to talk about this anymore. Why

is that?

You have to ask yourself why, after being so loquacious about this for

2 years, now they do not want to talk about it. Well, I think it is

understandable when you think about it.

Think about this: Mr. McClellan told the American people that the

President knows that the Deputy Chief of Staff was not involved in

this, that it was ridiculous. The Deputy Chief of Staff says, no, I was

not involved in this. The President of the United States says, no, he

was not involved in this, and people who were, we would fire them.

Now, you take those three individuals, somebody is not telling the

truth. Somebody is not being entirely candid with the American people.

The Deputy Chief of Staff is not being candid with the President,

perhaps, or the Deputy Chief of Staff is not being candid with the

press secretary, perhaps, or the press secretary is not being candid

with the American people, perhaps. There is a third possibility, and I

am not even going to suggest it on the floor of this House. But

somebody is not being candid with the American people about why an

American was punished for doing his duty when he was asked to go to

Niger.

I mean, you think about that. You imagine if the Federal Government

tomorrow called you and said, I have this tough task. I want you to go

to Africa where it is dusty and hot and a big day is when you get some

sugar in your tea, and I want you to find out if there is yellow cake

there because we are trying to decide whether to start a war or not. It

is a big, big deal. And you go there, essentially out of retirement,

and you bring back the truthful answer, and you give it to the

administration. They then ignore your conclusion and put it in the

State of the Union address anyway, a war is talked about to be started;

you have the guts enough to write an op-ed in The New York Times

telling America what you concluded, and, all of a sudden, the entire

Federal Government comes after you and destroys your wife's career.

That should not happen to any American of any political persuasion. And

that principle is an important one.

This is not the only time this has happened in America. You recall

back in the Vietnam era where there was an author who was critical of

President Nixon's war in Vietnam, Daniel Ellsberg; and he published in

The New York Times some information that was critical of the President.

So what did the President do? Did he thank him for sharing this

information with the public? No. He had people burglarize Daniel

Ellsberg's psychiatrist's office in order to get information to destroy

Daniel Ellsberg's credibility. That President tried to destroy their

critic's credibility, and that is what happened here. A different way,

a different strategy, a different effort, same goal: punish critics of

the administration.

We went through a Revolutionary War to get rid of King George because

we believed citizens rule the country and when citizens exercise their

right of free speech and they tell the truth, nobody here in

Washington, D.C. ought to be able to punish them. It was a principle

worth going to the Revolutionary War about it. And in a small way, we

are fighting it right here: that if you are a citizen and you tell the

truth, nobody should be able to punish you, even the most powerful

person in America. That is why we are filing this resolution of

inquiry.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to yield to the gentleman from New Jersey

(Mr. Holt), who has provided great leadership and who was working on

this subject last year to try to bring to the attention of the country

this issue. He has shown a lot of courage on this. I thank the

gentleman for joining us today.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from New Jersey. I

have to say, one of the troublesome things to me now that this

disclosure has come up, here the person, at least one, there might be

more people who are responsible for this besides the Deputy Chief of

Staff; there may be more than one, but at least one was a person who

talks to the President at least several times a day. I cannot

understand when this came out why the President did not demand his

inner circle to give him an affidavit saying they were not involved in

this, and get to the heart of this.

Instead, the President of the United States, who works across the

desk from the gentleman who is at least one of the people responsible

for this leak, the most powerful man in the world could not get a

straight answer. Now, if he did not get a straight answer on this

important thing, then the President should exercise what he promised

the American people he would do, which is to send that person on to

other pursuits, and we will see whether the President meant what he

said in that regard shortly.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentleman and mention one other

thing and ask for his response. There is one other excuse that we are

hearing floated about this today, and I have heard some people

defending the White House saying, well, this was not really that big of

a deal. We might have said there was yellow cake in there anyway,

because we really did not know; we would have thrown that up in the

State of the Union address anyway.

So no harm, no foul. I want to read something that Secretary of State

Rice said on July 26, 2003, ``My only point is that in retrospect,

knowing that some of the documents underneath may have been, were

indeed forgeries, and knowing that apparently there were concerns

swirling around about this, had we known that at the time, we would not

have put it in. And if there had been even a peep that the Agency did

not want that sentence, or that George Tenet did not want that sentence

in, that the Director of Central Intelligence did not want it in, it

would not have been done.''

Here we have the person sent by the CIA to get this information,

reported back these were forgeries, reporting back it is highly

unlikely there is yellow cake there, but the President put it in

anyway, and then Secretary Rice was candid.

She said we should not have put that in. So let us not let this sort

of octopus defense of squirting ink around this thing obscure a central

truth. The President gave false information to the American people, and

for one reason or the another did not report what his own agent, the

CIA, had sent, and then his administration punished that person.

This cries out for action by Congress.

Would it be fair to say that if these assertions are

true, someone put political convenience ahead of national security? I

will make that a rhetorical question.

Well, we would stand for the proposition that political

pettiness does not justify a breach of national security. I hope we can

have bipartisan consensus on that.

I would like to yield to the gentleman from New York (Mr. Hinchey).

I think you bring a very good point about Congress's

obligation to investigate the executive branch. We do have a checks-

and-balances system here. I think that is very important in this case,

because essentially the President has said, as he said yesterday, look,

this is a criminal investigation, so I have no responsibility

whatsoever, he implied this, to find out what happened here.

He says, you know, there is a prosecutor here, so I have no

responsibility to find out if people who work literally

in my office had outed a security agent for punishment for someone

telling the truth.

Whether there was a crime or not, any President, and this President

has said so, should fire a person who discloses secret information of a

covert agent's identity in part to punish a person who told the truth

in criticizing the administration.

Even if that is not a crime, it is a crime against the code of the

west and the expectations of millions of Americans, where we do not

allow our elected officials to punish us for criticizing the

administration. We do not allow a President's agents to jeopardize a

man's wife who is a secret agent, and expose their two young children,

and this couple have two of the most delightful young children that you

will ever meet in your life, and you can assume that this covert agent

for the CIA mother has the same concerns about her children that you

would when you are a covert agent and someone has blown your cover, and

then they attack Mr. Wilson's wife.

The President has an obligation that goes beyond simply upholding

this felony laws of America. His obligation to Americans is greater

than that. And he ought to call these people in and say, did you have

anything to do with this? And if they did, he needs to make a decision

about their continued employment. And yet he refuses to do that. That

is most troublesome. You know, there are fifth amendment privileges.

There are all of these little technicalities in the law. This is not a

technicality, we are standing up for the proposition that Americans

should not be abused in this regard.

We are running out of time. I want to yield to the gentlewoman from

California (Ms. Watson).

I think the Congresswoman has brought up another point,

and that is, the nature of this agent who is a covert agent operating

under cover for her own protection, and those people, as the gentleman

from New York (Mr. Hinchey) indicated, the gentleman from New Jersey

(Mr. Holt) indicated, the people that she worked with, the people that

she had lunch with in various countries around the world are now

suspect.

But it was interesting in the litany of excuses for this misconduct

that we have heard out of the White House for the last few days or at

least their operatives around the country, one of the excuses I have

heard is that the deputy chief of staff, Mr. Rove, did not know that

this CIA agent was a covert agent. He just did not know that.

And, therefore, he wants to excuse that misbehavior since he did not

know she was covert. Maybe she could have been just a receptionist at

the front desk. There is a problem with that. When you out a CIA agent,

you darn well better know whether they are covert or not before you

violate your security clearance in outing that CIA agent.

And unless we hear a real good reason that Mr. Rove asked the CIA and

was told inappropriately or something, there is no excuse for someone

in the highest levels of government, with supposedly the sophistication

working at the right hand of the President of the United States, not to

know you did not out a CIA agent knowing they could be covert.

The damage that has been done here to our security, to Joe Wilson's

spouse, to our trust in the Federal Government, was occasioned,

regardless of the intention of the deputy chief of staff, one way or

another there has been an abuse of both the family and our sense of

national security.

Madam Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for joining me.

I would like to conclude with a couple of comments. This is the

greatest Nation on Earth, and it is the greatest because it works on a

principle that our citizens should be in control of our democracy, not

people in power.

It works on the assumption that that power will not be abused. It

works on the principle that our elected officials will tell us the

truth. It works on the principles that people's wives should not be

attacked when a person fulfills their patriotic duty to go to Africa

and ferret out the truth.

It works on the principle that people are human and they can make

mistakes; but when they make mistakes, they ought to be candid and

forthright with Americans. And the sooner the President of the United

States is forthright and tells us what happened in this situation, the

better off both for the White House and for us as a whole. And if it

refuses to do that, which it is now stonewalling in its finest

tradition of those who were caught red-handed, it is refusing to give

Americans information.

That is why this House of Representatives needs to pass this

resolution of inquiry so that we can have a bipartisan review of what

happened here. Why? So that we can regain the bipartisan trust we need

to go forward with and deal with our pressing problems in Iraq, our

pressing problems with the threat of terrorism, and we can get back on

track in this government.

Before I close, I want to thank the Wilson family for their courage

in going to Africa. I want to thank Mrs. Wilson for her courage as an

employee of the CIA. I want to thank them for their courage in standing

up to the administration that has so willfully abused them. And I hope

that the truth that they have worked so hard to bring to the American

people will ultimately prevail in this affair.