Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman, my friend from

Washington, for this Special Order and for shining a light on this

subject. The gentleman is right, this is something, it is curious. I

have been trying for a couple of years to draw sharp attention to this,

to this exposure of the identity of someone whom we have asked to

undertake risky, dangerous, important assignments for quite a long

time.

The press seemed very interested in this other issue of their ability

to protect their sources, not an unimportant issue, but something apart

from this critical issue of how we as a country collect intelligence,

what we as a country ask of people who risk their lives to collect that

intelligence, and what we do about protecting their ability to do it

and protecting their lives and welfare.

This is a very important matter. Former President Bush, the current

President's father, said that those who expose our human sources are

``the most insidious of traitors.'' Ten former intelligence officers

signed a letter calling the disclosure of this particular officer's

identity ``a shameful and unprecedented event in American history.'' It

is an uncommon occurrence, and for good reason. Thank goodness, it is

uncommon.

Intelligence is intended to save lives. Intelligence is intended to

protect our national security. Intelligence is intended to be something

that prevents us from going to war. But to collect that intelligence,

people have to take great risks. Operating undercover, perhaps under an

alias, dealing with people in out-of-the-way places is often a

thankless job. We do not often acknowledge the people who do that. It

is a terrible thing when their effectiveness is lost through some

accident. It is even worse when they are exposed by the

counterintelligence people in another country.

But worst of all, of almost unthinkable tragedy, is when a person

would be exposed by his or her own government. Mr. Speaker, it is not

just a matter of ruining a career, it is not just a matter of an

affront to a person or her spouse, it is not just the loss of probably

millions of dollars that goes into developing an undercover agent,

providing the cover and all that.

No, it is more than the ruined career, more than the loss to our

Nation of effective intelligence. It actually puts that person at risk.

And anyone who ever had lunch with that person in a foreign country is

now suspected by that country as having been fraternizing with a spy.

We do not know what has happened to other people in other countries

because of exposure of identities of intelligence officers. That an

exposure should come from our own country is almost unthinkable.

So when we raise this subject today, it is not about political

``gotcha''; it is not to embarrass someone. No. It is because we as a

Congress have a responsibility to look after these people whom we have

asked to take great risks. And we have to make sure that this sort of

thing does not happen. That is why we want to know what happened and

how it happened. It is, well, like someone sending an e-mail to the

enemy with a position of our troops on the map. You do not do that at

wartime. That is treasonous.

Today, the members of the House Permanent Select Committee on

Intelligence on which I sit submitted a letter to the President, again

underscoring the importance of this matter, abhorring the disclosure of

identities of undercover officers, and asking that the President take

the step of removing the security clearance from anyone known to have

any association with this. We certainly know that Karl Rove, as

acknowledged through his attorney, that he disclosed the identity,

maybe not by name, but he might as well have; the identity of an

intelligence officer to a reporter of a national news magazine.

Because the officer was undercover, her identity could be known only

through access to classified information. There is ample precedent for

suspending the security clearances of people under suspicion of leaking

classified information. So we formally and soberly asked the President

to suspend any and all of Mr. Rove's security clearances, at least and

until the Fitzgerald investigation is complete. That is just one step.

But we here in Congress have an important role beyond that, a role of

oversight to make sure that we, as I say, look after the welfare,

effectiveness, and safety of those whom we have asked to take risks for

our country so that we can know what is going on around the world, so

we can avoid war, so that we can save lives, so that we can advance

democracy.

I thank my colleague from Washington for this Special Order; and I

hope, now that the country's attention is focused on this subject, that

we really can get to the bottom of it. The President said at first that

he would find and fire this person. Then a little bit later he said,

you know, it is going to be really hard to find the person.

This is the same President who said we will find Osama bin Laden,

wherever he is in the world. But among the 5,000 people in the White

House, I am going to have a hard time finding out who it was who leaked

this. Well, we know at least one person in the White House now who was

party to this. The President should take action so that this sort of

thing will never happen again.

Mr. Speaker, I would say this goes beyond political

punishment. We certainly could condemn his punishing the envoy who went

to learn the truth about the uranium from Niger. But for whatever

reason to disclose the identity of someone whom we have asked to take

risks, life and death risks on our behalf is almost unthinkable.

And to do it for what appear to be gratuitous political reasons makes

it all the more shameful.

I cannot imagine why this name would have been released,

but for the sake of creating political embarrassment for someone. I

call that a gratuitous breach of national security.

There does not seem to be any higher purpose here. I suppose you

might be able to imagine some circumstances where for some higher

purpose you probably could dream up something where releasing the

identity of, you know, someone we have put in such a dangerous position

might be justifiable, but this certainly is not it.