Mr. Speaker, we are back here this evening for another

installment of our weekly Iraq Watch. Tonight I am joined initially by

the gentleman from the State of Washington (Mr. Inslee); and I expect,

as the hour proceeds, other members of Iraq Watch will join us for our

weekly discussion.

The revelations of the past several days concerning abuses of

detainees or prisoners under the auspices of American military have

shocked and appalled the world. And as many have indicated, including

the President, Secretary Powell, and Secretary Rumsfeld, this is

unacceptable, unconscionable, and un-American. It is an embarrassment

to our country, to our military; and it is my understanding that a

variety of congressional committees intend to address this particular

issue.

But what concerns me is something that is fundamental to what we have

been talking about these past months about our policy in Iraq and the

Middle East in the war on terror, and that is credibility, competence,

and the willingness of this White House, this administration, to

consult with Congress. I think that there is a growing realization that

this President, this Vice President, and this administration have

failed on all accounts.

There was a report today in the media which quoted President Bush

regarding these appalling revelations. And I would like to read to my

friend and to the Speaker and to those who might be viewing us this

evening as we have our weekly conversation excerpts from those reports

in the international as well as the American media:

`` `The first time I saw or heard about pictures was on TV,' the

President,'' referring to President Bush, ``said, leaving open the

question of when he first learned about the substance of the

allegations that prompted an initial investigation in January of this

year. But General Peter Pace, Deputy Chair of the Joint Chiefs of

Staff, said that `Everyone was kept appraised orally of the ongoing

investigation.' Asked whether Bush and General Richard Myers, Chairman

of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, his direct supervisor, were well aware of

the situation, General Pace responded, `Yes.' Myers, the country's top

general, raised eyebrows over the weekend when he said that he had not

read a report completed in early March that documented the widespread

abuses in Abu Ghraib. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld had also not

read the report that was completed in March by this Monday,'' by this

past Monday, ``5 days after the damning photographs were first shown on

the CBS television program 60 minutes, a spokesman said.''

I find that absolutely incredible. The Secretary of Defense had not

read the report until this past Monday, and the report was completed in

March. What is going on? One can only describe this as ineptitude of

the highest order.

Let me continue: ``Congressional leaders have bitterly complained

that they were kept out of the loop and were particularly incensed

after the Pentagon reported Tuesday the deaths of 25 prisoners in Iraq

and Afghanistan including at least two confirmed homicides. The

Congress has not been notified of the murders that took place. `There

have been no reports of these abuses,' Republican Senator John McCain,

himself a prisoner during the Vietnam War, told ABC television on

Wednesday.''

From the Cox News Services, Senator McCain went on: ``The Congress

should have been notified of this situation a long time ago. It's a

neglect of the responsibilities that Secretary Rumsfeld and the

civilian leaders of the Pentagon have to keep the Congress informed of

an issue of this magnitude.''

I agree with Senator McCain. Even the majority leader of this House,

this body, who certainly has taken the most hawkish position possible

when it comes to the issue of Iraq and Afghanistan had this to say:

``We are being briefed all the time. If we are going to be a part and a

partner in this war on terror, then we are to be completely briefed,

not just briefed on those things they want us to hear.'' Of course, the

majority leader of this body is the gentleman from Texas (Mr. DeLay).

I see the gentleman from Washington (Mr. Inslee), and he has a look

in his face that he wants to make a comment.

Mr. Speaker, reclaiming my time, I do not know if my

friend was aware, but the second largest army in Iraq today is not the

army of the United Kingdom, but it is this army of private contractors.

Let us call them what they really are, they are mercenaries.

I dare say, to privatize a war without the command and control of

American generals and American officers is a very, very dangerous

precedent that is being established.

I think what we are seeing here tonight, what we are talking about

tonight, rather, is an example of where it can lead. We all have to

acknowledge and remember that the entire world is now viewing, not just

simply the photographs, but the realities of the war on the ground and

the fact that the United States of America is privatizing its military,

privatizing its war, delegating to those who are not necessarily

responsible and accountable to American military command absolutely

significant duties.

Reclaiming my time, Mr. Speaker, I think it is

appropriate that we speak about the contractors and their roles, this

private army, these mercenaries. It is also important again to go back

to what I spoke to earlier, the incompetence and the ineptitude that is

so rank and so disturbing.

It is as if nobody knows what is happening. The President of the

United States is seeing this on TV. The Secretary of Defense has not

read the report until this week, and the report was completed in March.

If that is the case, if that is the fact, and we do not know that, I

cannot understand what is going on in terms of this administration and

its efforts.

What the gentleman is saying is that we need at this

point in time a bona fide consultation, unlike what we have had to

date. And this is not a partisan attack on the administration. This was

the opinion of Republicans who supported the war dating back to January

of 2003 in a column by Robert Novak of the Sun Times in Chicago. Let me

quote again some excerpts that I think are very revealing about the

attitude of this White House and this administration towards this

institution and towards a shroud of secrecy that has been unparalleled

in our history.

``Republican Senators gathering last Wednesday for their first

session retreat should have been happy, blessed with a regained

majority and a popular President. They were not. Instead, they

complained bitterly of arrogance by the Bush administration, especially

the Pentagon, in treatment of Congress all along the road to war. It

informed the White House Chief of Staff Andrew Card that there were

grievances from President Bush's Senate base; that it is ignored and

insulted by the administration, particularly by Defense Secretary

Donald Rumsfeld in preparing for the war against Iraq. Recitals of

complaints began with Senator John Warner, a pillar of the Senate GOP

establishment. Warner had his colleagues' attention when he addressed

Card. `I will not tolerate,' he boomed, `a continuation of what has

been going on over the last 2 years.' He cited cavalier treatment that

denies information even to the venerable top Senate Republican on Armed

Services.

``Next up was Senator Pat Roberts, a former Marine officer who has

spent the last 40 years on Capitol Hill. Roberts, a plain-spoken

midwesterner from Kansas, is the new Senate Intelligence Committee

Chair. He told Andrew Card to mark him down agreeing with everything

Warner just said. Senator Kit Bond of Missouri got up next and repeated

similar concerns.''

So this is not a partisan attack on the President. This is a

bipartisan concern that this administration act competently and consult

with Congress. These issues are too serious.

Just to pick up on the point by my friend, the

gentleman from Ohio (Mr. Strickland), it is beyond the incompetence and

the ineptitude that seems to characterize the civilian leadership of

the Department of Defense. That can only be called callousness, and it

is rank and raw. And maybe he ought to join us as we attend the

funerals of those who have died in the service of this country. I have

already attended two, two funerals. A young man in Quincy and just

recently a young man in Plymouth. This Saturday I am attending another

funeral. And just maybe if Under Secretary Wolfowitz was at that

funeral with me, he might know the number of Americans that have died

in this war. But maybe it is just simply ineptitude.

We were talking earlier about these contractors, these mercenaries,

these Hessians, if you will. A report exists that has targeted two

individuals who worked for contractors. Now, I am not going to reach a

conclusion, because everyone deserves due process, everyone deserves

the implementation of the rule of law as we know it in our democracy;

but they have not even received notice. Just imagine that. They have

heard nothing from the Pentagon.

It is in a report and there has been no communication to these

private companies. Yesterday in the New York Times the lead contractors

implicated in prison abuse remain on the job. They are still there.

More than 2 months after a classified Army report found that the two

contract workers were implicated in the abuse of Iraqis at a prison

outside of Baghdad, the companies that employ them say they have heard

nothing from the Pentagon and that they have not removed any employees

from Iraq.

For one of the employees, the Army report recommended termination of

employment and revocation of a security clearance. For the other, it

urged an official reprimand, whatever that means, and review of his

security clearance. Military spokesmen in Washington and Baghdad said

Monday evening they had no information on whether the workers were

still on the job or why the report had not been conveyed to the

companies. One of the principles in the company noted with apparent

irritation that the military still had not provided the company with a

copy of the report completed February 22.

What is going on with the civilian leadership under the direction of

this Secretary?

It just gets worse.

Mr. Speaker, the chief executive of one of the civilian

contractors said in an interview this past Monday, just stop and pause

and think of that, this past Monday, said we have not received any

information or direction from the client regarding our work in-country.

No charge, no communications, no citations, no calls to appear at the

Pentagon.

That is exactly the word. I will look through. We have

not received any information or direction from the client.

The client is the American taxpayer. That is who the

client is, the American people.

As my colleague knows, at least it has been reported in

the paper, that the Secretary will appear before the Senate Foreign

Relations Committee or some other committee of the United States Senate

to respond to the concerns that Republicans and Democrats and everybody

has articulated over the last several days.

I would hope that one additional question might be asked of this

Secretary who stands here next to the President of Uzbekistan, who is a

tyrant, a despot and a dictator, who some day will rival Saddam Hussein

as a gross violator and threat to regional stability, but is now part

of the coalition of the willing, but I digress.

From the book which was offered regarding the experiences of the

former Secretary of Treasury Paul O'Neill, there is related an

anecdote, and I think it needs an answer because I do not want to make

an accusation, but this anecdote occurred on February of 2001, months

before our national tragedy of September 11, but the preparations were

underway to do something about Iraq, to do something about Iraq.

On page 96, let me read, Beneath the surface was a battle, O'Neill,

that seemed brewing since the National Security Council meeting on

January 30. Remember, the President had been in office for a week. It

was Powell and his moderates at the State Department versus hard-liners

like Rumsfeld, Cheney and Wolfowitz, who were already planning the next

war in Iraq in the shape of a post-Saddam country. Documents were being

prepared by the Defense Intelligence Agency, Rumsfeld's intelligence

arm, mapping Iraqi oil fields and exploration areas enlisting companies

that might be interested in leveraging the precious asset. This is less

than a month after President Bush was inaugurated.

One document entitled Foreign Suitors for Iraqi Oil Field Contracts

lists companies from 30 countries, their specialty, bidding histories

and, in some cases, their particular areas of history. He expressed the

desire to dissuade countries from engaging in asymmetrical challenges

to the United States, as Rumsfeld said in his January articulation, of

the demonstrative value of a pre-emptive attack.

I would like to have a response to that particular page. What was the

memory of Secretary Donald Rumsfeld? Why was he preparing at that

point, cutting up the pie, if you will, allocating oil contracts months

before 9/11?

Mr. Speaker, meanwhile, what is happening in terms of

the war on terror. We are talking about Iraq, and yet all over the

world, murky, small, nebulous cells of fundamental Islamics who hate

America are being spawned.

Mr. Speaker, maybe tomorrow if we have some time we will come back

and do a wrap-up. Again, I thank my colleagues for this installment of

Iraq watch.