Mr. Speaker, it is difficult, while our proud men and

women are serving in the field in Iraq, to tell some very unfortunate

truths about the failure of the executive branch of this government to

live up to their service in Iraq. It is difficult to say the truth,

which is there has been gross incompetence, deception, manipulation of

the truth, failure to recognize reality in Iraq which has got us in

such an unholy mess by the executive branch of the Federal Government.

That is not pleasant to say given what our troops face in Iraq tonight.

But it is necessary to say it.

And the reason it brought hope to me when I was visiting a family

that lost a son and a husband in Iraq while serving in an incident

where he earned the Bronze Star posthumously, a man who will not be

coming home to his children, when I talked to his widow, the one thing

she impressed upon me that she wanted me to do is to not fail to blow

the whistle on executive branch incompetence which has created such

problems in Iraq or at least not responded to them the way they should.

And this body, the people's House, has an obligation to blow the

whistle on these multiple failures, and they are multiple. And tonight

I think we are going to talk about 10 failures of the executive branch

of the government, which has been responsible in part for some of the

difficulties that we face in Iraq.

And the first one I would like to mention is the one that leads in

part to some of the problems we face with handling prisoners of war.

The public is well aware of what happened here. I heard a conservative

commentator yesterday just describe this as the soldiers just having a

good time, just blowing off steam. It is that kind of attitude that

apparently permeated our command and control structure in our prisoner

of war camps, and that kind of attitude has the potential to inflame

the Arab world and create more enemies of the war we are fighting

against al Qaeda right now. It is a gross mistake.

It is a failure of a command and control structure.

One of the problems this Congress needs to get right to the bottom of

is this scandal regarding private contractors in Iraq. We have heard of

multiple scandals involving overpayments to the Halliburton

Corporation, multiple scandals involving mispayments and overpayments

for oil to these corporations, many of whom are great political donors,

I might add, in the United States political system.

But there is another one we need to get at, and that is why we have

private contractors doing interrogation of prisoners of war in Iraq,

who are outside

the command and control structure, who are not subject to military

discipline, and who apparently were instrumental in this debacle in our

prisoner of war system. There is an error and failure that we need to

get to the bottom of.

If the gentleman will yield further, this is starting to

permeate our whole system. We are finding that contractors are going to

leave when the temperature gets too hot. We have got these private

contractors doing interrogation and involved in this scandal in our

prisoner of war camp.

Let me suggest this is part and parcel of the second failure. The

first problem we talked about is a failure of command and control. But

the second failure of this executive branch is the failure to be honest

with the American people as to what this war is costing and their

desire to fight a war on the cheap. While our people are losing their

lives in Iraq, this administration refuses to be honest with the

American people about the real cost of this war.

Let me suggest two reasons that I know that is true. Number one,

instead of having a military system that is capable of fighting this

war and putting the troops on the ground that were really needed, they

tried to do it with these private contractors, many of whom are, again,

engaged in the political process in this system and are political

allies of those making executive decisions about this war. Number one.

Number two, as of this moment, in the middle of this war, while our

soldiers, men and women are putting their lives on the line, this

President has not shown how to pay for this war, and today I am told

now proposed another $25 billion of deficit spending to pay for this

war.

If our soldiers can put their lives on the line, this executive

branch ought to say what this war is really going to cost us and how

long we are going to be there and how we are going to pay for this war.

And just adding it open to the backs of our children just will not

wash. Maybe that is the politically expedient thing to do. Maybe when

you start a war based on false information, and we now learned it is

false, maybe you want to kind of sweep it under the rug, how many

billions of dollars it is going to cost the American taxpayers. But it

is the wrong thing to do, like it is the wrong thing to do to fight

this war on the cheap, to have contractors in there instead of folks in

your command and control system. We need to get to the bottom of that

failure number two.

Mr. Speaker, if it was one failure, wars are tough, some

things go wrong; and if it was one failure, maybe we would be in the

excusing mode. But it is interesting. Of all of the failures that have

happened in Iraq from day one, not one single person has lost their

job, except maybe recently in this POW camp situation.

Who is my constituent, by the way, and we will talk about

that in a few minutes. But let me suggest that there is not one

failure, there are 10 failures. And before the night is out, I want to

list the 10 failures of this executive branch which are significant

which have gotten us into this mess.

Failure number 1. They told us and the world that Iraq had weapons of

mass destruction. The President of the United States said on August 26,

2002, ``Simply stated, there is no doubt that Saddam Hussein now has

weapons of mass destruction.'' That statement was false.

Number 2. They told us they had clear and convincing evidence of the

connection between Saddam Hussein and the attack of September 11 and al

Qaeda. No matter how many times that is said, that statement is false.

We have now seen the intelligence briefing. There was no such evidence.

That statement was false.

Third: they told the American people that we would be greeted as

liberators, rose petals strewn at our feet, happy convocations of

democracy-seeking Iraqis greeting our personnel carriers. As a result

of that failure, Americans died, because they refused to send armor

that would have protected our soldiers from these improvised explosive

devices along our roadways, and they sent them with thin skin, sheet

metal Humvees not as thick as your washing machine that did not protect

our soldiers.

Now, why did they make that such fundamental error? Why did they not

send our armored personnel carriers that we have 11,000 of them sitting

in warehouses around this country, why did they not send those? Well,

there is a reason. It is because they were so, and I have no other word

to put it but arrogant, to believe that their wisdom would be accepted

by the entire Mideast when they came into Iraq, and they were wrong,

and our people died.

Issue number 4: they ignored clear evidence that we needed more

troops on the ground after the collapse of the Iraqi Army. General

Shinseki, General Zinni, many people told them, when the Iraqi Army

collapses, there is going to be massive looting and chaos and you are

going to need hundreds of thousands of troops to protect us and the

Iraqis, and they ignored it. Why? Because of arrogance.

Issue number 5: they refused to say we needed the U.N. Now the

President is now saying we needed the U.N., now. Well, it is a little

late now when the rest of the world is refusing to become involved.

Number 6: they refused to have elections. I am told Jay Garner, the

first provost they had, suggested they needed elections. That is kind

of what democracy is about. Now, proposedly, the President is going to

turn over sovereignty on June 30. What a joke. The only thing these

people are going to control in Iraq after we hand-pick these people are

who gets library cards. Every single thing else is going to be run by

us, and Iraq knows it. I will go quickly.

Number 7: No command and control and adequate training in handling

these POWs with a massive black eye to the United States of America.

When we have tens of thousands of people doing a great job in Iraq, our

reputation has been soiled.

Number 8: no armor. We talked about that.

Number 9: no plan to pay for Iraq. We have over $130 billion of

payment of Iraqi expenses, and this President has not suggested one

single dollar except deficit spending to pay for this war.

Number 10, and this is the one maybe that is the most no-brainer to

me I can think of. They sent 130,000 troops into Iraq without body

armor, knowing that you are sending them into the war and into the dens

of modern combat without modern flap jackets. That is 10, and that is

enough.

I just want to offer a brief suggestion why that is. How

could the Assistant Secretary of Defense not know our casualties? How

could you possibly explain that? Well, there is an explanation.

This administration has got us into a war and is pursuing a war based

on wishful thinking rather than hard reality. Now, wishful thinking is

fine in Hollywood. It makes some great dramas, but it is a lousy way to

win a war; and it costs people's lives, and that is what is happening

tonight. They have wishful thinking: if we just stay the course, the

Iraqis will accept the government we are trying to force down their

throats. It is wishful thinking that the ID are going to stop and the

Humvees are going to stop the attacks on our soldiers. It is wishful

thinking that somehow we will find $150 billion a year to pay for this

war.

They refuse to recognize the hard cold reality that our soldiers are

facing every day in Iraq. It is morally, ethically, and democratically

wrong; and that is why we are here tonight.

Mr. Speaker, I think it is important to say what is

happening in Iraq due to the deception and falsehood by this

administration is not only a threat to our soldiers, it is a threat to

democracy itself. There is no greater violation of the democratic

principle than an administration that does not tell the truth to the

American people, and we are not getting the truth. We know we did not

get the truth about WMD or a connection to 9/11, but now we find it was

months and months before we got to the truth because somebody leaked

pictures about this scandalous situation in our POW camps.

This is a direct threat to the democratic principle. If you want to

know how bad things are going to go, when the government does not tell

the truth to the American people, I want to quote something I read

today. I was with the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. Strickland) at the

Library of Congress this evening, and they have an exhibit about

Winston Churchill. On page 42 of this pamphlet, it has a picture of

Winston Churchill and Lawrence of Arabia taken in 1921 at the Cairo

Conference. It says, ``During this meeting, Churchill helped establish

the government ethnic composition and political boundaries of Iraq and

other portions of the Middle East.''

When the British did that, they told their people they would be there

for a year or two and they would help bring democracy to Iraq. Lawrence

of Arabia told them they were crazy because they did not understand the

ethnic composition of that part of the world.

Do Members know the year they left Iraq after getting in in 1922, the

British Empire, 1953; 31 years. What is 31 years, that is 2035 if we

have a similar misunderstanding as to what is going on in Iraq.

The sad situation is this administration has demonstrated repeated

failures to understand the challenges we have in Iraq. I want to offer

one idea. We have offered a lot of criticism and we have called for

accountability of people which is a democratic principle. We have

called for accountability of people in this administration who should

be removed because of their repeated failures, misjudgment and

deception.

There is only one way we are going to get out of Iraq, and that is

allow the Iraqi people to seize their own destiny, and that destiny may

not be perfect according to what the Oval Office wants it to be, but

this President has to recognize he cannot run Iraq from the Oval

Office. The Iraqi people are going to have to fashion their own

destiny.

That is why I believe we should call for early elections this summer

if possible, as was done in the town of Tar and the village of Shatra,

a town of 250,000. They have had elections. They have done it using

their ration cards. In these towns, they have already had elections.

You bring in your ration card, you stamp it when there is a vote, and

you pick who you think should be in charge of your destiny.

The Iraqis need to get involved in their country's future. Right now

they are dependent on us for everything. They are dependent on us to do

all of the dying and spending. We need Iraqis to grasp their own

destiny, and the best way to do it is through elections. Those

elections may not be as good as the one in Florida in 2000, but it

would be a lot better than us picking the people that we are going to

shove down the Iraqi's throats in this bizarre situation.