Mr. Speaker, March 19 will mark the 3-year anniversary

of the Iraq war. For 3 years, we have heard the President respond to

questions about his handling of the war in Iraq with, ``Who are you

going to believe, me or your own eyes?'' Kind of like what Groucho Marx

used to say.

For 3 years, we have seen the President and his supporters celebrate

milestones in Iraq as an indication that the insurgency was ``in its

last throes,'' while the insurgency actually continues to grow and

persist.

While the administration keeps trying to spin its way out of Iraq, we

keep witnessing the truth. Today, for instance, John Negroponte told

the Senate Armed Services Committee, ``Even if a broad and inclusive

national government emerges, there will almost certainly be a lag time

before we see any dampening effect on the insurgency.'' In other words,

even if we establish a functioning government and democracy, the

insurgency in Iraq will persist, just the opposite of what the

administration has been telling us.

Mr. Speaker, it is time that the President acknowledge what we can

all see with our own eyes every night, that the administration's

failure to secure the peace early in Iraq has led Iraq to the brink it

is in today. Had we secured not just the war, but the first days of the

occupation with a plan for that occupation and actually secured the

country and had not allowed the first levels of insurgency to grow, to

metastasize to what we have today, we would never have what we have

now. But we went in with a plan for the war with not a single idea, not

an iota of anything to do on the occupation.

Three years ago, brave men and women of the American Armed Forces

fought brilliantly until defeating Saddam Hussein and his army. But the

President failed to plan for the peace, and he failed to work quickly

to establish order in Iraq and left it leaderless. In fact, many of our

troops were on the sidelines as looting went rampant throughout Iraq,

leading in that stage every way sequentially to what we have today. And

why did it fail? Because he didn't listen to what we knew we had to do.

For the past 3 years, the President has maintained that if the

American leaders in Iraq needed more troops, all they had to do was

ask. Just last week the President said, ``I will determine the troop

levels in Iraq based on the recommendations of our commanders, not

based only the politics of Washington, D.C.''

Paul Bremer, the Ambassador to Iraq, the President's top man in Iraq,

called for more boots on the ground in the days following the invasion

and was ignored. On page 10 of Paul Bremer's book, ``My Year in Iraq,''

Paul Bremer writes that he was alarmed by a report stating that we did

not have enough troops on the ground to stabilize the country.

The report said: ``The population of Iraq today is nearly 25 million.

The population would require 500,000 troops

on the ground to meet a standard of 20 troops per 1,000. This number is

more than three times the number of foreign troops now deployed in

Iraq.''

Paul Bremer writes:

Now, I am not here to help sell books for Paul Bremer, but the

President's top man asked for more troops to succeed in Iraq and never

got an answer from either the President of the United States or from

the Secretary of Defense. When Secretary Don Rumsfeld completely

ignores the man who is in charge of America's most important policy

mission, we have a problem.

A few days later, Paul Bremer got a chance to air his concerns to the

President:

Troop levels never increased. The troop level never got up. In Iraq,

Bremer's worst fears were realized, and he writes:

We will never know for sure if more troops would have secured Baghdad

in time to prevent the insurgency we see today, but we do know that the

President's top man had asked for help and the President failed to

respond, and the Secretary of Defense failed to respond; and today we

are seeing the results of that failure. And we do know that 136,000 men

and women who are there now do not have the support that they need.

If you look today in the New York Times in a poll done by Mr. Zogby,

the American troops don't think we have enough troops. They also don't

think we should continue to stay there at the level that we are there.

Retired Army Lieutenant General Bill Odom, former head of the

National Security Agency, said that the invasion of Iraq

Lawrence Wilkerson, former Secretary of State Colin Powell's chief of

staff at the State Department, said President Bush's foreign policy was

and said that

Mr. Speaker, it is time for a change in policy.