Mr. Speaker, we are here tonight, several of my

colleagues will be joining me for our weekly hour that we describe as

the Iraq Watch, which reviews issues of interest and concern to Members

on both sides of the aisle as well as the American people.

But before we begin talking about events of the past several weeks in

Iraq, Afghanistan, in the Middle East, I was conversing earlier with my

colleague from the State of Washington (Mr. McDermott) regarding some

of the statements given earlier on the floor by our colleagues and

friends from the Republican side of the aisle. And I want to commend

them and congratulate them for taking this issue of waste and fraud and

abuse seriously.

I understand that they are describing themselves as waste watchers. I

can assure them that we will work together with them. We will cooperate

and we will collaborate. Because, as the gentleman who last spoke

indicated, it is absolutely essential that we use taxpayers' dollars

efficiently, honestly and bring the highest possible return on the

investment of those dollars in the American people.

In fact, I am really pleased that this is happening, and I dare say

if our Republican colleagues reach out to Democrats that we will join

with them and

make this a bipartisan effort. I would simply note that it is late in

coming, however, because I think it is important to underscore who has

been running the government here for the past 4 years.

I am joined by my friend from Pennsylvania (Mr. Hoeffel); as I

indicated earlier, the gentleman from Washington (Mr. McDermott), my

colleague and friend; and, of course, the gentleman from Washington

(Mr. Inslee) and an original member of the Iraq Watch; and maybe I

could pose a question to him.

Is it the gentleman's understanding that President Bush, who is a

Republican, has served in that capacity for some 3 1/2 years?

So is it true that the Republicans became a majority in

this particular branch back in 1994? I was not here in 1994. I think

the gentleman from Washington (Mr. McDermott) was here in 1994. But who

has been setting the agenda and running the House of Representatives

since January of 1995?

And Paul O'Neill.

Larry Lindsey, and the role of those who disagree, who

were independent thinkers, there is a lengthening list.

But I dare say that future generations could very well look back on

this particular moment in our history and Ahmad Chalabi would have a

very special status. Because, as the gentleman indicated, Mr. Chalabi

is very skillful, has a sordid history, if you will; was convicted of

embezzlement in the Nation of Jordan; was sentenced in Jordan, an

erstwhile ally of the United States when it comes to the war on terror

and an ally of the United States in an effort to resolve the Israeli-

Palestinian issue; was sentenced in a Jordanian court to some 22 years.

At a meeting that the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. Hoeffel) and

myself and others had with King

Abdullah, I posed the question, was the king, our friend, our ally,

ever consulted before Mr. Chalabi was named to the now-defunct Iraqi

Governing Council? And his response was a terse no. I found that very

disturbing because he went on to say that we, meaning the Jordanians,

the Lebanese, have serious problems with Mr. Chalabi.

Well, I think what we are discovering is that we have serious

problems with Mr. Chalabi. Mr. Chalabi has become an embarrassment to

this administration.

The gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. Hoeffel) indicated earlier that

he sat in the gallery to my left while the President delivered the

State of the Union address. He sat directly behind the First Lady.

Mr. Chalabi has a relationship with the President of the United

States. One only has to see, Mr. Speaker, this picture. It is my

understanding that the President, who is dressed casually here, on his

trip during Thanksgiving to visit the American servicemen there, and we

applaud him for that, is pictured here with Mr. Chalabi, Mr. Chalabi

who provided false intelligence, according to reports emanating from

the Department of State and from the CIA, which led this Nation into

war. It was defectors whom Mr. Chalabi brought to the administration's

attention which talked about weapons of mass destruction, which talked

about links with al Qaeda, which talked about links with Osama bin

Laden, all of which have been proven to be patently false.

It is very disturbing when we reflect and think that this false

information was utilized in the course of the debate on the resolution

authorizing war and was never questioned by the White House, by the

President, by Vice President Cheney, by Mr. Wolfowitz, by Mr. Douglas

Fife and by Mr. Pearl, who at that point in time served on the Defense

Policy Board. That information was simply accepted because they were,

in my opinion, looking for facts to support their desire to go to war

against Iraq.

And here we are. Today, a front page story in the New York Times

that, if this is true, this will represent, in my opinion, a scandal

that will rock this Nation.

Not only, Mr. Speaker, were we given false information and false

intelligence, but now we read in The New York Times that Mr. Chalabi,

and let me quote for a moment before I defer to my colleagues: ``The

Iraqi leader and former ally of the Bush administration disclosed to an

Iranian official that the United States had broken the secret

communications code of Iran's intelligence service, betraying one of

Washington's most valuable sources of information about Iran, according

to United States intelligence officials. They said about 6 weeks ago,

Mr. Chalabi told a Baghdad station chief of Iran's Ministry of

Intelligence and Security that the United States was reading the

communications traffic of the Iranian spy service, one of the most

sophisticated in the Middle East.''

If that be true, we have been betrayed. It was this President, George

W. Bush, standing beside Mr. Chalabi in this very House during the

course of a State of the Union address, who used that term ``axis of

evil'' when he spoke of Iraq, when he spoke of North Korea, and when he

spoke of Iran as being three members of that axis of evil. And here we

have, according to The New York Times, and Mr. Chalabi has to be given

an opportunity to respond, like the administration has to be given an

opportunity to respond, to this absolutely outrageous potential alleged

act of treason against the American people. It cannot stand.

Mr. Speaker, if my colleague will yield to me, does

this not just come down to basic incompetence?

I mean, no one is questioning or raising at this point

in time malice or inappropriate intentions on the part of those

policymakers, but it is almost beyond comprehension to believe that

they would have fallen for the likes of Ahmad Chalabi.

I mean, in a recent Newsweek magazine, the May 31 edition, it says it

all: ``Bad intel and broken trust. Ahmad Chalabi and the road to war.

Our con man in Iraq.'' We were being conned, if you accept the validity

of these allegations made by intelligence officers.

Exactly. And that is pointed out in this edition of

Newsweek. Again, let me quote: ``Chalabi has not always charmed his

patrons. His first run as a CIA asset in the early and mid-1990s was a

disaster. His case officer did not trust him. There was a lot of hanky

panky with the accounting. Triple billing, things that were not

mentioned, things inflated. It was a nightmare, says a former U.S.

intelligence official who worked with Chalabi.'' His quote. ``His

primary focus was to drag us into a war that President Clinton did not

want. But he had more luck with a group of Republican hard-liners who

formed a kind of government in exile, the so-called neoconservatives

like Wolfowitz and Richard Perle and Doug Feith.''

As I said earlier, when we pause and think that we went to war in

part because of information given by this individual standing with the

President of the United States, and that we have lost how many men and

women? The costs have exceeded already $200 billion, put aside the

blood and the pain and the anguish that Americans serving in Iraq and

their families have had to experience. This is outrageous.

And now we find on the front page of The New York Times, Mr. Speaker,

a story claiming that he provided the most highly sensitive information

to Iran, which, according to reports, is developing a nuclear weapons

program, is being accused by the President of the United States as

being a member of an axis of evil. What is happening? This is

incompetence. These people are not running or managing this issue

except in the most incompetent way. They are blinded by ideology.

And look where we are now. The rest of the world does

not believe us. A recent poll was taken in Latin America among the

economic elite, not the poor, the disadvantaged, the down-trodden, if

you will. It was done in seven countries. In five countries, the

negative opinion of President Bush exceeded 90 percent. The average was

87 percent. This hurts us at many, many different levels.

Now we are faced with a scandal of a magnitude that I dare say we

have not seen since Watergate, where we paid somebody who was conning

us, that was betraying us to a potential adversary in Iran that the

President of the United States described as a member of the Axis of

Evil Club. Now we have the President of the United States today,

according to CBS, has sought the help of an outside lawyer to represent

him in the probe into who leaked the name of a CIA operative to a

newspaper columnist. Believing that Bush will be interviewed or asked

to testify before a grand jury, White House officials confirm that the

President has put a Washington attorney on hot stand-by, CBS reported

tonight.

The gentleman from Ohio (Mr. Strickland) is now joining us, our other

stalwart member of Iraq Watch.

What we have here is a growing morass, if you will, of

investigations, of embarrassment, of loss of prestige, of the erosion

of our moral authority in the world. And, most importantly, in addition

to costing the American taxpayers hundreds of billions of dollars, we

are now putting our men and women who have performed so valiantly and

professionally in Iraq, we are putting our military at risk, we are

putting our national security at risk.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. Strickland).

Mr. Speaker, the gentleman has provoked a thought. What

we have here is the absolute converse of what occurred back in the

early 1950s. We have a professional military, a military that every

American supports and a military that has conducted itself with valor

and a military that all Americans can be proud of, but a civilian

leadership that is incompetent. If we are ever going to win the war on

terror, if we are going to defeat terrorism in this world, it is

absolutely essential, as the gentleman said, for a new team.

I was at a hearing today in the Committee on International Relations

which the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. Hoeffel) and I serve on. We

all remember, it was a unanimous vote in this Chamber to go into

Afghanistan and go after the real enemy, al Qaeda, the fundamental

Islamists, eliminate them and reduce the threat. We had the support of

the entire world. We had a genuine coalition.

Oftentimes, the French are castigated and denigrated on this floor,

but if Members remember, it was the French national paper Le Monde that

on September 12 said, ``Today we are all Americans,'' and now we have

gone in another direction.

Members all know who Robert Novak is, an extremely conservative

columnist, certainly not one who in most cases we would share the same

viewpoint on a variety of issues, but here are his comments in a column

he did recently. ``The handful of valiant American warriors fighting

the other war in Afghanistan is not a happy band of bothers. They are

undermanned and feel neglected, lack confidence in their generals, and

are disgusted by Afghan political leadership. The overlooked war

continues with no end in sight. Narcotics trafficking is at an all-time

high. If U.S. forces were to leave, the Taliban or something like it

would regain power. The U.S. is lost in Afghanistan, bound to this wild

country and unable to leave.''

It is Special Services that is given the task of confronting armed

narcoterrorists on a day-to-day basis.

Mr. Speaker, we are losing; not just in Afghanistan, but we are

losing everywhere. This is a highly volatile, highly dangerous moment

in our national history.

Mr. Speaker, reclaiming my time, if I can just for a

moment speak to the issue of America's standing in this world. I am

reminded of DeTouqueville when he came to this country, a Frenchman who

toured the original 13 States, and he made this observation. He spoke

of America's greatness, and he said America is great because America is

good.

The world has always looked towards the United States of America, not

just because of its military strength or its economic power, but

because of our moral authority. Americans through the generations have

earned that title, that title of ``American,'' because we are a moral

and a good and generous Nation.

But that perception of the United States is changing. We hear a lot

about oil and our motives in terms of why we went into Iraq.

I remember reading the book ``The Price of Loyalty'' that was done by

an author regarding the experiences of Paul O'Neill, former Secretary

of the Treasury. I would ask my friends on all sides of this particular

issue to take the time to go to page 96, because I have been asking

this question for months now, and I cannot get an answer. Maybe I am

simply frustrated.

But at a meeting of the National Security Council on February 27,

some 7 months before our national tragedy on September 11, this is

Secretary Paul O'Neill, a highly respected Republican who served in the

Reagan administration, who served under this President Bush's father,

let me just take an excerpt and read it to you:

``Beneath the surface was a battle O'Neill had seen brewing since the

National Security meeting on January 30, which was about a week after

the inauguration. There was Powell and the moderates at the State

Department versus hardliners like Rumsfeld, Cheney and Wolfowitz, who

were already planning the next war with Iraq and the shape of a post-

Saddam country. Documents were being prepared by the Defense

Intelligence Agency, Rumsfeld's intelligence arm, mapping Iraq's oil

fields and exploration areas and listing companies that might be

interested in leveraging the precious asset.

``This was occurring weeks after the inauguration. There was a

document entitled `Foreign Suitors for Iraqi Oil Field Contracts.' It

lists companies from 30 countries, including France, Germany, Russia

and the United Kingdom, their specialties, bidding histories, and, in

some cases, their particular areas of interest. An attached document

maps Iraq with markings for super-giant oil fields, other oil fields,

and earmarks for production sharing.''

So we wonder, we wonder why the perception of this great and generous

Nation is now being attacked, is now being questioned.

Recently there was a survey done by the Pew Foundation, and it was

particularly disturbing because many across the world doubt our motives

and believe that our real intent is to control Mideastern oil. In

Russia, 51 percent of that population believes that that was why we

invaded Iraq; in France, 58 percent; in Germany, 63 percent; in

Pakistan, 54 percent; in Turkey, 64 percent; in Morocco, 63 percent;

and in Jordan, 71 percent. This, I submit to my friends, is most

disturbing.

Then we have a report in Time magazine, all Americans by now are

aware that Dick Cheney, the Vice President of the United States, whom

in Bob Woodward's most recent book, ``The Plan of Attack,'' is

described as having a ``fervor for war.'' That was by Colin Powell.

Colin Powell said that, not one of us. It now appears that Time

magazine reports that an e-mail from the Army Corps of Engineers says

that ``Douglas Feith, an Undersecretary of Defense, approved

arrangements for the Halliburton contract, contingent on informing

White House tomorrow. We anticipate no issues, since action has been

coordinated with the Vice President's office.''

And we wonder why our bona fides and our motives are being

questioned? What happens now when the rest of the world reads that

information in a journal that is generally regarded with respect, that

represents American thinking?