I have heard the gentleman's arguments. I hope

my good and dear friend from Massachusetts will stick around for my

response to what he has said.

We are good buddies.

I would like the gentleman to hear my

response.

Mr. Speaker, I do not know if my colleague has

read anything that Lee Hamilton, the Democrat co-chairman of the 9-11

Commission, had to say on the News Hour with Jim Lehrer on June 16,

just last week, 2004. Let me read what Lee Hamilton said: ``We have

solid reporting of senior-level contacts between Iraq and al Qaeda

going back a decade. Credible information indicates that Iraq and al

Qaeda discussed safe haven and reciprocal nonaggression. Since

``Operation Enduring Freedom,'' we have solid evidence of the presence

in Iraq of al Qaeda members, including some that have been in Baghdad.

And then Chairman Kean of the committee, along with Chairman Hamilton,

said that there definitely were a number of contacts. Chairman Kean

called these contacts shadowy, and the administration agrees with them.

These were contacts between a deadly terrorist organization that was

seeking support in a country that the administration knew had supported

other terrorist operations.

So to say that nothing was going on, I mean they did not meet to have

tea and crumpets. They did not meet just to have an ice cream sundae.

Mr. Speaker, since we are going back in

history, let me just say that we had the attack on the World Trade

Center the first time in 1993; in 1996 we had the Khobar Towers; in

1998, we had embassy attacks in Nairobi; in 2000, we had the USS Cole,

all during the previous administration. And during that time when Osama

bin laden was in the Sudan, there were 13 known-terrorist training

camps under his control, and the CIA reported those to the previous

administration, and nothing was done about it.

So when we start talking about this administration's being asleep at

the switch, the fact is that President Bush, when he took over, decided

to do something about it because there were contacts between al Qaeda

and Saddam Hussein. Uday Hussein had one of the leaders of al Qaeda

just last year in Baghdad for medical treatment. They had a very close

relationship.

So my question to my colleagues is this: Why did the previous

administration not, when they knew there were 13 terrorist training

camps in the Sudan, they knew that Osama bin Laden was there, they knew

that the CIA had talked about it and said let us go in and get him, and

they did not do a doggone thing after all these attacks on U.S.

installations?

If the gentleman will yield briefly,

Condoleezza Rice, the Vice President and a whole host of National

Security Council members were at that meeting. The gentleman to whom

you are referring is sour grapes because he lost his job as Secretary

of the Treasury. Their interpretation and their recall of that meeting

does not jibe with that at all. That is his singular opinion.

So let me just say that one person's comment at a meeting does not

make it so.

What is that?

That is the gentleman's prerogative.

If the gentleman will yield further, I will be

happy to do that, if you ever give me some macadamia nuts.

Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman will yield, let

me just say according to most news reports that was not a factory for

weapons of mass destruction, as was anticipated, it was an aspirin

factory; and there was no reason for it. There were a lot of people,

including the media, that thought it was a ``wag the tail'' type of

attack.

Mr. Speaker, the fact of the matter is the

President went to war with Iraq because of two reasons: One, weapons of

mass destruction; and two, the threat to security in the Middle East

and the United States of America, and because there were indications of

a connection between al-Qaeda and Saddam Hussein. And there is

documentation even stated in the 9/11 Commission report or in the 9/11

Commission statement.

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Mr. Speaker, I hope we have more of these.