Mr. Speaker, I anticipate that shortly I will be joined

by some colleagues for our customary Tuesday night hour where we

discuss the situation in the Middle East with a particular focus on

Afghanistan and Iraq. We have described this hour as the so-called Iraq

Watch. As we did recently, I think it is an opportune time to explain

to those watching us this evening and my colleagues who preceded us

that the normal legislative business of the House of Representatives

has concluded, and we are now in that period called Special Orders.

That is why we have an empty Chamber. Members are elsewhere, doing

their homework and getting prepared for tomorrow's legislative

business. Again, in terms of equity and fairness, Republicans are

allocated 2 hours and Democrats are allocated 2 hours and we alternate

back and forth. As I mentioned earlier, I anticipate that I will be

joined relatively soon by the gentleman from Washington (Mr. Inslee),

the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. Strickland), and the gentleman from Hawaii

(Mr. Abercrombie) to have our customary conversation.

But I would like to begin this evening's conversation with those that

are viewing us and, as they join me, with my colleagues about the issue

of credibility, because as I am sure we are all familiar, if our word

is not trusted, if we are perceived to be untrustworthy, we encounter

serious problems as we go through life. The same is true obviously of a

nation, particularly a Nation like ours that claims justifiably a

certain moral authority, a Nation that values truth and honesty and a

Nation that is hurt when others speak of deception and deceit when it

comes to the United States of America.

The reality is, Mr. Speaker, that our motives are being questioned.

There was a recent survey done by the Pew Foundation. This was a survey

done in seven nations spread across Europe and the Middle East.

Majorities in those seven nations believe that our intervention in Iraq

was motivated by a desire to control Mideast oil. Let me read to you

those nation-states and the percentages that embrace this particular

view of the United States of America. Fifty-one percent of the people

in Russia accept as gospel that our intervention in Iraq was predicated

on a desire to control Mideast oil. Fifty-eight percent of the

population of France shared a similar view. Sixty percent of German

society echoed those sentiments. In Pakistan, the number was 54

percent. In Turkey, an erstwhile ally, 64 percent, almost two-thirds of

the population, believed that the United States launched the attack on

Iraq because of our desire to control Mideast oil. In Morocco, that

number was 63 percent. In Jordan, that number was 71 percent.

What is particularly disturbing, Mr. Speaker, is unfortunately this

cynical view is reinforced by various news accounts that reveal

American companies have been doing business with rogue nations. There

was a recent CBS ``60 Minutes'' expose. I think most Americans were

unaware that despite the fact that nations like Libya, like Iran, like

Iraq were considered rogue nations, Iran particularly, being one of

those nations designated by the President as part of the Axis of Evil,

that in fact American corporations, or let me restate that,

subsidiaries of American corporations could actually do business with

those whom we considered our enemy, with those whom we had placed on a

list described as being those states sponsoring terrorism.

This issue was really brought to light by the New York City

comptroller who in his research discovered that the $80 billion in

pension funds for all city workers were invested in corporations such

as GE, ConocoPhillips and Halliburton that exploited, if you will, this

loophole in the law. Obviously, people from all over the world are

fully aware of the fact that the Vice President, Richard Cheney, was

the former CEO of Halliburton. So I know it comes as a surprise to them

and certainly came, I think, as a shock to Mr. William Thompson, who

was the New York City comptroller, that pension funds were invested in

Halliburton, and Halliburton had created a subsidiary, a subsidiary in

the Cayman Islands that purportedly was doing business with Iran.

As we have recently discovered, of course, Iran is suspected of

developing a nuclear weapons program. Clearly, any business that would

be done with a rogue nation would benefit that rogue nation. In any

event, this particular expose by ``60 Minutes'' that established that

there was an offshore subsidiary of Halliburton in the Cayman Islands

was in fact operating during the tenure of the Vice President.

According again to the transcript of the 60 Minutes interview, the

subsidiary sells about $40 million a year worth of oil field services

to the Iranian government. This does not enhance our credibility, Mr.

Speaker. I think it undermines our credibility. And when the 60 Minutes

crew went to interview officials from Halliburton, they were denied

access.

But again they got on a plane. They went to the Cayman Islands, and

what they discovered in the Cayman Islands was an office with a phone

and no employees. Subsequently, because of a conversation they had with

an individual in the building which housed this so-called subsidiary or

independent company, they were told that, no, that mailing gets

rerouted to Houston. Subsequently, they learned that in Dubai, which is

a city in the United Arab Emirates, that there was the operating arm of

the particular embassy. But, again, no answer, no response.

So what we have is a parent company, Halliburton, declining a request

by 60 Minutes for an interview but through e-mail communicated it has

no intention of leaving Iran or addressing the questions that the

interviewer had raised about the independence of its subsidiary.

So we wonder sometimes why we are perceived in a particular way,

because, again, our credibility is so vital to our claim of moral

authority. I do not have an answer, Mr. Speaker. But I think the

American people are owed an answer. I along, with several other

Members, my colleagues on the Iraq Watch, have requested to the

Attorney General, Mr. Ashcroft, that a special prosecutor be

investigating to determine whether there is potential criminal

culpability. But it goes to our core value of transparency and honesty

and truth.

Much has been stated recently about the testimony of Richard Clarke,

and that continues to play out. As we have seen today, the National

Security Adviser, Ms. Rice, apparently will testify before the 9/11

Commission. But I think the salient import of Mr. Clarke's position is

that Iraq had been the focus of concern since the beginning of the

administration, and that seems to be confirmed by the former Secretary

of the Treasury Paul O'Neill.

So I went back and reread the book authored by Mr. Suskind in

collaboration with the former Secretary of the

Treasury and his recount of the first meeting on January 30, 2001, it

had to be just several days after the inauguration, and I would like to

read to those that are viewing us here this evening just excerpts from

that particular book.

I see I am joined by the gentleman from Hawaii (Mr. Abercrombie). It

is good to see him here.

But there is a discussion about the Arab-Israeli conflict, and the

book reads as follows: ``The Arab-Israeli conflict was a mess and the

United States would disengage. The combatants would have to work it out

on their own.'' That was the position of those that were present or at

least it would appear to be the consensus that was emerging at the

time.

``Powell said such a move might be hasty. `The consequences of that

could be dire,' he said, `especially for the Palestinians.'

``Bush shrugged, `Maybe that's the best way to get things back in

balance.'

``Powell,'' obviously a reference to Secretary Powell, ``seemed

startled. `Sometimes a show of strength by one side can really clarify

things,' Bush said. He turned to Rice. `So, Condi, what are we going to

talk about today? What's on the agenda?'

`` `How Iraq is destabilizing the region, Mr. President,' Rice said.

In what several observers understood was a scripted exchange, she noted

that Iraq might be the key to reshaping the entire region.''

This is an excerpt from the former Secretary of the Treasury, Mr.

O'Neill's, book. That is 5 days after the President was inaugurated.

The next excerpt that I will read from was a meeting of the

principals, the Cabinet members on the National Security Council. This

was conducted on February 27, 2001. Again, the purpose clearly was the

emphasis by the Secretary, the Secretary of Treasury, Mr. O'Neill, that

it was all about Iraq. This is in February of 2001. Clearly this would

corroborate, I would suggest, the import of Richard Clarke's recent

book ``Against All Enemies.''

But what is interesting in this particular excerpt is a reference to

oil, a reference again to oil. We are not talking about terrorism. We

are talking about oil, and let me quote this passage.

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

National Security Council meeting on January 30. 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

and the shape of a post-Saddam country.'' Remember, this is February

27, 2001, months before the tragedy that befell us on September 11.

``Documents were 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. One document head `Foreign Suitors for Iraqi Oil Field

Contracts' lists companies from 30 countries, 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 earmarked for production sharing

while demarking the largely undeveloped southwest of the country into

nine blocks to designate areas for future exploration.''

So I guess, Mr. Speaker, I should not be surprised that in seven

nations, according to the highly respected Pew Foundation, a survey

revealed that substantial majorities in those nations believe that it

was the intention of the United States to invade Iraq to control Mid

East oil. The excerpt I just read from Secretary O'Neill's book relates

his impressions, not mine, not the gentleman from Hawaii's (Mr.

Abercrombie), and not the gentleman from Washington (Mr. Inslee), my

colleague who has just arrived. So we are talking about oil here and

the interest of oil, and this is the impression that the Secretary of

Treasury that served in the Bush administration concluded.

Well, again, all of this goes to the credibility of the

United States.

When administration officials, and particularly the Vice President,

make statements that in one case was contradicted the next day by the

President himself regarding links between Saddam Hussein and al Qaeda,

when on a Meet the Press program the Vice President of the United

States suggested that there were links and then the next day the

President of the United States came out and unequivocally said there is

no evidence linking 9/11 and Saddam Hussein, and then subsequent to

that, subsequent to that, in January of this year the Vice President

again repeats the assertion, the allegation, about linkages, there is a

cumulative impact here.

There is a cumulative impact, because, after awhile, people are

saying, you are conning us; you are misleading us. Like just recently,

the Prime Minister of Poland, an ally in the coalition of the willing

that is still in Iraq, said, ``We were misled. We were taken for a

ride.''

If I can interrupt, I believe that goes to the question

of competence; and the issue of post-war planning has been roundly

criticized.

Again, let me go back earlier to the excerpt that I

recited from the O'Neill book. On February 27, the administration was a

month old. Here we have a meeting of the National Security Council of

the United States talking about exploration, mega-giant oil fields,

contracts.

I would hope that those that might be viewing this conversation this

evening, and I am not here shilling for Mr. Suskind and former

Secretary O'Neill, but they should go out and read the book, because we

know that Mr. O'Neill was castigated, and we also are fully aware that

Mr. Clarke is being attacked and maligned.

But what I suggest is, read these two as companions. It is clear that

there is no collaboration going on between Mr. O'Neill and Mr. Clarke.

But the salient point is from the day they came into office, this was

about Iraq. This was about Iraq.

If I can interrupt, I think we are usually in

agreement, but here I have to disagree, because it was not immediately

after 9/11. Yes, I believe the President did make that statement, and I

presume he will acknowledge he made that statement. It has been

acknowledged implicitly by the spokesperson for the White House.

But if you go back and examine the record, this administration, and

particularly the Vice President of the United States, for whatever

reason, presumably this grand vision of a Middle East rearranged in a

manner that purportedly would move democracy forward, believed that

Iraq was the linchpin to having that happen, and a conclusion had been

reached and they were simply looking for the opportunity to invade

Iraq. That was before 9/11.

I have to say this about the Vice President, and,

again, those who might be listening to us tonight, if you have access

to a computer, go on line. On March 10, the headline reads, page 1 of

the New York Times, ``CIA chief says he corrected Cheney privately.''

Even today, it is the Vice President, more than anyone in this

administration, who will not let it go.

David Kay said, and, remember, David Kay was the chief arms inspector

for the United States, embraced by this administration to go and search

for the weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, David Kay said we were all

wrong. It is time to give it up.

He indicated in a speech just recently in Cambridge, Massachusetts, I

think he used the term ``Waiting for a Hail Mary pass, like Vice

President Cheney is doing, presents us with grave threats.''

That is David Kay speaking. That is not some partisan Democrat. That

is not the putative nominee for the Democratic nomination for the

President. This is beyond politics.

Mr. Speaker, a question that I would like to have

answered by the 9/11 Commission. Well, maybe it is not appropriate for

the 9/11 Commission; let me retract that. However, I think it is a

question that this administration should answer via some mechanism,

because we were all here that night when we heard those words regarding

the search for highly enriched uranium in the African nation of Niger,

which turned out to be totally false, and which had been discredited

and discounted by a variety of intelligence agencies throughout the

world and particularly, not the CIA, but the DIA and the appropriate

agency within the Department of State. They just simply did not accept

it.

Yet a week later, on February 5, the Secretary of State made a very

powerful presentation at the United Nations; and in that particular

presentation, Secretary Powell made no reference, no allusion to that

particular situation, to the fact that or at least the assertion that

was presented by the President regarding looking for uranium in Africa.

I am sure that he did that because, as was reported in a variety of

media outlets, he sat down with the CIA, the Director and analysts

within the CIA, and discarded that information.

Why was it inserted in the State of the Union, and yet approximately

a week later was not part of the Secretary of State's presentation

before the United Nations? And did the Secretary of State communicate

to the President of the United States, to the Vice President of the

United States his basis, his rationale for not including a very serious

allegation that was made by the President in the State of the Union

address and not included in his presentation at the United Nations

before the world? It is incomprehensible.

Mr. Speaker, is my friend aware of the fact that the

President of Afghanistan recently was compelled to delay the elections

that were scheduled in June to September?

Hopefully, September.

And I dare say that that election date is very much at

risk, as the gentleman suggests that Afghanistan, as a viable nation-

state embracing democracy, is very much at risk, because we have

ignored Afghanistan since we achieved a stunning military success, but

then diverted our efforts and our resources and our attention to Iraq

where there was only one terrorist, and that was Saddam Hussein, who

terrorized his own people. But the terrorists in Afghanistan were the

terrorists that were training, that were appearing again to attack

America. And today, we are still searching for them.

Mr. Speaker, I think it is really important to the

people who are watching this to understand this: that historically,

Saddam Hussein and Osama bin Laden were bitter enemies. In fact, in the

mid-1980s, there was a group akin to al Qaeda in terms of its world

view, fundamentalist Islamist, a perverted form of that holy religion,

that great religion, that attempted to assassinate Tarik Aziz. Saddam

Hussein, the tyrant and the thug that he was, just eradicated him. So

historically, we should have known that those that attacked us were the

same people that as recently as this month, as recently as this month

killed hundreds of people in Madrid, Spain; and we need the help of the

entire world. That is why I go back to this issue of credibility: Who

is going to believe us?

I know that there are some that will strut and swagger and be tough

and say, we can do it alone. Well, I do not want to do it just with

American men and women.

This will only be successful, this war on terror, if we do it working

with others and we have to have their trust. We have to have their

confidence. We will never accept appeasement, but we have got to be

honest

Mr. Speaker, in retrospect General Shinseki, who was

treated in an extremely dismissive manner, his advice should have been

heeded and, maybe just maybe, today we would be looking at a totally

different situation in Iraq than what we are currently embracing.

I am sure you are aware that the leader, the dominant leader of the

Shiites in Iraq, Ayatollah Al'sistani, is already circulating

information, pamphlets, decrying the Constitution. I mean, it has been

reported that CIA analysts are concerned about a civil war in Iraq