Mr. Speaker, the gentleman might find it

interesting, with regard to the points that he has just been making and

the possibility of oil exploration, I believe was the phrase that was

used, mapping of fields, potential drilling areas and so on. Well, does

the gentleman recall that while we were unable to prevent looting, mass

looting not just of the Baghdad museums, the history of the entire

Middle East, really the Mesopotamian history there, but unable to stop

looting in virtually every area of Baghdad and throughout Iraq,

hospitals, schools, businesses, everywhere, was it not interesting the

Oil Ministry was guarded? And I wonder how that took place. I wonder

what the emphasis was.

Would the gentleman be interested in a story from USA Today of March

29, Monday, as follows: ``In 2002, troops from the Fifth Special Forces

group who specialize in the Middle East were pulled out of the hunt for

Osama bin Laden in Afghanistan to prepare for their next assignment in

Iraq. Their replacements were troops with expertise in Spanish

cultures. The CIA was stretched badly in its capacity to collect,

translate, and analyze information coming from Afghanistan. When the

White House raised a new priority, it took specialists away from

Afghanistan in an effort to ensure Iraq was covered.''

USA Today added, ``Those were just two of the trade-offs required

because of what the Pentagon and the CIA acknowledged is a shortage of

key personnel to fight the war on terrorism,'' not the engagement in

Iraq, the war on terrorism that we hear about all the time. ``The

question of how much those shifts prevented progress against al Qaeda

and the other terrorists is putting the Bush administration on the

defensive.''

Troops with the capacity to hunt Osama bin Laden in Afghanistan were

removed and sent to Iraq. Now I believe the gentleman will observe

there is a renewed emphasis on catching and capturing or killing Osama

bin Laden, as if this had been put into limbo for some period of time.

I wonder if the gentleman would observe, as I do, that there may be

more than a coincidence here with respect to what he has just been

sharing with us?

If the gentleman will yield further, the people from

Poland may be having second thoughts after today's activities. I do not

know if the gentleman is aware that in Iraq today, those soldiers, part

of the contingent from Poland, came under assault from those who, and I

almost hesitate to say because it sounds as if I am making an ironic

comment, and that is not really my intention, the situation speaks for

itself, they were assaulted by those who are complaining that their

applications to be police officers were not being properly processed.

So, apparently, the people who want to be the police officers are now

engaged in gang assaults in Iraq; and in this instance it happens to be

against those who have been sent there from Poland. I think this is

only a precursor of those things which are to come.

If the gentleman will yield further, that is

precisely the point. In the context which

you mentioned of the Vice President, Mr. Cheney, indicating that we

should pay the closest attention and give the highest credibility to

the idea that links, and those are the phrases of choice of the Vice

President, Mr. Cheney, links on the most peripheral basis, links on the

periphery must be nonetheless taken very, very seriously.

I hope the gentleman agrees that is a fair characterization of what

Vice President Cheney has been doing, that the most elliptical

connections must be taken with all seriousness. At the same time, he

denies his links and connections to the Halliburton Company, to the oil

companies that he has served slavishly throughout his career, have

anything to do with the decisions that have been made with respect to

Iraq, with the decisions, political decisions, made with respect to

invading that nation.

If the gentleman will yield on that point, and

looking, I might add, for an opportunity to deny that ongoing sanctions

would prevent, should those weapons actually exist, their utilization,

either against us, certainly, or against neighbors, other than by

assertion.

If the gentleman will yield, perhaps he could spell

the word democracy for me. I believe it is spelled O-I-L. I believe

they are synonymous with the gentleman to whom you are referring.

Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman will yield a moment

before he continues on that point. The gentleman cited a part which

implied, or not implied but I believe explicitly stated was true with

respect to utilization of poison gas on Iraqis, more particularly

Kurdish Iraqis. Does the gentleman know, and if he does not, perhaps he

would find it of worthy interest to pursue, whether or not that gassing

or the reference to it took place before or after the first Bush

administration was in Iraq doing business with Saddam Hussein? And, if

I am not mistaken, the person representing George Herbert Walker Bush

and his administration is the present Secretary of Defense.

Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman would further yield on

that point, my reference to that is not to disparage anything that the

Secretary did in pursuance of policies which he was clearly following

with respect to his service in the first Bush administration, but

rather to illustrate that it is at best a bit tiresome, if not

hypocritical, for the present Bush administration to cite that as if

the United States was some innocent standby observer, shocked at the

fact that this took place, disturbed that it had taken place, doing

anything in the way of diplomatic activity to indicate that we

disapproved of it in any way, shape, or form. Quite the contrary.

What the United States did is stand by and not try to ``complicate''

the issue, and I say that with quotation marks around it, by making,

from what I am best able to determine, any kind of significant demurer

with respect to what Saddam Hussein had done in that instance.

Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman would yield, I would

contend to him that it is not incomprehensible if the intention all

along was to go into Iraq and to go into Iraq at the expense of the war

on terror in Afghanistan. We can see what the results are.

I would quote to the gentleman from the Financial Times of Monday, a

report which indicated that a United Nations body will warn this week

that Afghanistan is in danger of reverting to a ``terrorist breeding

ground.'' That is the phrase utilized in the Financial Times story

characterizing the United Nations' report, that Afghanistan is in

danger of reverting to a terrorist breeding ground with an economy

dependent on the illegal drug trade, unless the international community

significantly increases development funding for the war-torn country.

Now, we have billions and billions and billions, tens of billions of

dollars to be expended in Iraq at the present time with its economy in

collapse, except, we are told, for its ability to produce oil. The

economy in Afghanistan is now reverting to the pre-Taliban days. If the

gentleman will recall, we supported the Taliban to the tune of $40

million because it was involved in eradicating the drug trade. The drug

trade has come back with a vengeance. It is now supplying funding in

the absence of any international effort being made in Afghanistan and,

as a result of the switch in emphasis on terrorism from Afghanistan to

Iraq, particularly in the wake of what I contended to the gentleman at

the beginning of my statement that it was deliberate. It is not

incomprehensible if it is a deliberate policy of the administration to

find a methodology of presentation to the country sufficient to raise

the fear factor to a level that would allow this invasion to take

place. That was the purpose and the intent all along, and the result

that the

administration has to be held to account for is that Afghanistan now is

reverting to a status in which it could be called a terrorist breeding

ground in a United Nations report.

Hopefully, September.

Yes.

Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman would yield on that

point, I would contend and do contend that the biggest supporter of the

invasion in Iraq was Osama bin Laden. It does not take a cracker-jack

specialist in strategy to understand that when your enemy, i.e., the

United States of America, is addressing all of its attention, its

military prowess, and its funding in a direction opposite from where

you are, that that is, in fact, very good for you.

Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman will yield on that

point, I will point out in turn that come June 30 you are going to see

what it is like to be alone. We are going to be cut loose in less than

100 days in Iraq, not just in Baghdad, but in Iraq; and our Armed

Forces there will be adrift. There will be no one to report to.

We have no status of forces agreement with anyone that can be

enforced. We have no idea with whom we would enforce such an agreement.

All our armed services, all our Armed Forces in Iraq after June 30 will

be left to fend for themselves and make decisions on the spot as to

what they will do and how they will operate and who they are working

for and with. There will be no operative government whatsoever, and

this is being done entirely for political reasons because of the utter

failure of this operation.

The gentleman will recall that I indicated back at the time of this

invasion that this would not be a war, that this would be a lightning

attack on Baghdad, and then the war would start. I trust the gentlemen,

both of them, will recall me saying that; and I think it was quite

clear to those of us serving on the Committee on Armed Services that

was going to be the result, and even then we indicated as a result of

the testimony of people like General Shinseki and others, upon whom we

have relied to good effect in the past, that unless we were properly

prepared with the logistics, even that lightning attack would suffer

casualties and set us in circumstance less than what we could be in

terms of the military might of this country.

That is precisely what happened. That lightning attack was

accompanied by consequences in terms of supply and logistics which

harmed us and harmed those who served in that attack, and then the war

began, and we are suffering from that kind of war right now, as we

speak tonight; and on June 30, I can assure you that the level of

combat in terms of what the United States is going to suffer is

scarcely beyond imagination

Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman will yield on that

point, all this is true, and I think we have to reiterate it, but that

is retrospective. Prospectively, I think we have to look at June 30,

and I hope, Mr. Speaker, that when we have the opportunity next to come

before you, Mr. Speaker, that we will be able to address that question.