If the gentleman will yield on that point, I would like

to comment on what you just said, but before I do so, I would like to

make a statement of why we are here tonight.

This is months after the Iraq war started, and I just want to state

the reason I am here tonight is the people who are fighting this war

deserve answers of how this war started based on false information. If

it takes us years to get to the bottom of how this was started, why it

was started and who started it so that they can be held accountable, we

are going to be here until we get those answers.

But you have put your finger on a very, very important point; and

that is that the people who this administration are attacking, Mr.

O'Neill, Mr. Clarke, Ambassador Wilson, the actuary of the Medicare

fund, all of whom are being attacked by this administration, their

statements have proven to be true in the last several weeks. One of the

great ironies of this is that this administration is attacking civil

servants for telling the truth.

Look at Mr. O'Neill. As you indicated, he was attacked because he had

the temerity, and this was the Secretary of the Treasury, a high-level

person appointed by the President of the United States on a personal

basis. Mr. O'Neill said, ``In the 23 months I was there, I never saw

anything that I would characterize as evidence of weapons of mass

destruction. There were allegations and assertions by people.'' That is

from Mr. O'Neill's book.

He said that in January 30, 2001, before September 11, the President

instructed at the National Security Council meeting, that the President

directed the Secretary of Defense, Donald Rumsfeld, to ``examine our

military options'' with regard to Iraq.

Mr. O'Neill was quite viscerally attacked by the administration for

making those statements. But now it turns out in listening to

statements by Condoleezza Rice and essentially Donald Rumsfeld and Mr.

Clarke, those things were true. From their own lips, of people still in

the administration, that statement was true.

Mr. Clarke a week or so ago had the temerity to point out that on the

day after September 11 the Secretary of Defense said something to the

effect like ``let's get ready to bomb Iraq,'' and it was pointed out to

the Secretary of Defense that al Qaeda, who at that point we knew was

behind the September 11 attack, that al Qaeda was in Afghanistan, not

Iraq. Mr. Rumsfeld responded, ``Well, there are not any targets in

Afghanistan.''

Mr. Clarke originally said, ``Well, I thought he must have been

kidding.'' It turned out he was not kidding, and when asked about that

on a talk show this weekend, Mr. Rumsfeld, I did not hear him deny it.

Incredibly, I did not hear him deny it.

What I heard was Mr. Clarke pointed out that on September 12, when he

talked to the President of the United States, the President of the

United States took him aside and said, essentially, ``I want you to

look and scrub to see if you can find any evidence whatsoever that it

was Iraq behind this.''

Mr. Clarke wondered about that, because he felt the President was

essentially pushing to find something that had not been reported to

date.

Originally, you know what the administration said? They said Mr.

Clarke was not there that day. Well, today we find from Condoleezza

Rice not only was he there, but, yes, those conversations apparently

took place.

So what we are finding is we are finally getting down, after peeling

the layers of the onion, to the truth of what happened in Iraq. And

what happened in Iraq is that this administration very early on was

bent on taking a course of action involving military action in Iraq.

It is not that they were forced to by this overwhelming intelligence,

this mountain of intelligence that led us to the inescapable conclusion

that Iraq had these weapons of mass destruction. As early as the day

after the attack on September 11 they were looking for some reason to

start a war in Iraq. This is something that has been confirmed today by

their own statements.

It is apparent the questions asked by the President were

not about the inspection program. The statements were ``let's go bomb

Iraq, because there are no targets in Afghanistan,'' or something to

that effect.

If the gentleman will yield further, I think what the

gentleman is pointing out is that there were huge falsehoods that are

now apparent that were told to the American

people, to the U.S. Congress, that were used as a premise to start this

war.

I want to talk about just a couple of those and see what the

administration has done in response to those.

The President on March 17, 2003, said, ``Intelligence gathered by

this and other governments leaves no doubt that the Iraq regime

continues to possess and conceal some of the most lethal weapons ever

devised.

``This regime has already used weapons of mass destruction against

Iraq's neighbors and against Iraq's people.'' The second half of that

is true, but the first statement is false. Yet, no one in the

administration has admitted the falsity of that statement, despite

overwhelming intelligence information to this effect. We have people

serving, and we have lost over 500 Americans in this war that was

started based on a falsehood, and no one in this administration has had

the courage and the willingness to straight talk, to say these

statements were false that were the basis for this war.

Mr. Speaker, it is clear that our country did not have

things to be proud of at the time that the Kurds were gassed. We could

talk at length about that.

Mr. Speaker, we should have clearly raised a siren

internationally when that was going on, but let us not compound the

error by leaving these falsehoods to lie like sort of a stinking

mackerel in the moonlight right now without this administration

clearing this up and shooting straight with the American people.

Because on January 28, 2003, the President of the United States stood

right behind the gentleman from Hawaii and addressed the Congress and

the American people and said, ``The British government has learned that

Saddam Hussein recently sought significant quantities of uranium from

Africa.'' That statement was false, and the administration knew it was

false.

He went on to say, ``Our intelligence sources tell us that he has

attempted to purchase high-strength aluminum tubes suitable for nuclear

weapons production.'' That statement was false.

Mr. Speaker, we appreciate the reminder.

That statement was false, and it was false at the time it was made.

The reason I know that is that subsequent information has revealed that

our own agencies have reported that they concluded that those aluminum

tubes were probably going to be used for some standard rockets, not

anything to do with centrifuge tubes; and yet the President of the

United States told the American people there is no doubt that Iraq had

some of the most lethal weapons devised by man. Now, the fact of the

matter is, if this is some innocent thing that occurred, we need the

President to address the American people about how this happened.

Now, I am glad that the President has finally allowed Condoleezza

Rice to publicly answer some of the questions around what has happened

in some of this affair. It is unfortunate that it has taken so long to

be drug to the public spotlight; but, nonetheless, we hope this will

shed some light on this.

Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman will yield for a moment, I

just want to sort of reiterate basically what the gentleman is saying.

I keep hearing more and more evidence that with the President taking

our eye off the ball of al Qaeda, it has damaged our ability to bring

them to the ground; and it has done that in multiple ways.

We had a hearing the other day in the Committee on Financial Services

about our ability to track down and cut off the funds of al Qaeda

coming out of Saudi Arabia, because that is where the money came,

largely, from al Qaeda. It turns out the administration has had a lot

of the forces that could have been used to cut off the money going to

al Qaeda, the people who killed 3,000 Americans, to chase Saddam's

funds all around the world. Now, it would be nice to get a hold of

Saddam Hussein's funds. That is fine. I am sure he abused and did the

Iraqi people tremendously, not only personally, but fiscally. But the

guy who killed over 3,000 Americans is at large; and his network of

raising money is still intact, because this President took our eye off

the ball and cut off some of the resources we had to cut those

resources off from al Qaeda.

Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman would yield, we have got

people there tonight who are sitting ducks for this terrible situation

in Iraq, and there are two things really galling to me about this.

Number one, I have heard some people in these Chambers sort of

suggest, well, we only lost a couple today; we only lost 10 this week;

we only lost 100 this last couple of months; it is not like Vietnam.

Well, I have got to say when I went to a family 2 weeks ago to spend

the Sunday with them when their father and husband of two young kids is

never coming home again, it is just like no other war; and these

numbers, this is not a numbers game.

These people who are serving tonight deserve something. They deserve

their government to be accountable to them, to be responsible to them

as to why this war started based on false information given to the

American people, and we are now learning that there was lots of false

information given to them. They are entitled to that. The American

people are entitled to that, and we are intending to get that one way

or another.