Madam Speaker, once again we come to the

floor this evening as part of Iraq Watch. We do so this evening with

both heavy and somber hearts for everything that is going on as we

currently speak in the Middle East. Our hearts especially go out to our

great ally Israel, as it wards off vicious attacks by Hezbollah. Once

again, it only underscores the need for us in this body to do the kind

of oversight and review and have the kind of dialogue and discussion

that has been absent on the floor of this House and in our respective

committees.

Madam Speaker, as we have on so many of these occasions, we begin

this evening by once again honoring as well those brave men and women

who wear the uniform of our country. They serve this Nation so

valiantly.

Let me also acknowledge so many veterans and individuals who have

played such a key role, especially those from the Vietnam era, in

understanding and helping us recognize that it is so important to

differentiate between the warriors and the war. So we salute those

brave men and women who are in harm's way, who are dealing with

untenable situations they are confronted with in Iraq.

I especially want to draw attention again to a bill that we have

before this body that we are still seeking more signatures to, and

requesting and asking the Speaker and the majority leader to bring it

to the floor by unanimous consent.

I do not believe that there is anyone in this body that does not

understand the need for making sure that the Iraqi government does not

grant amnesty to those who kidnap, kill, torture and maim American

citizens and American troops.

And so I think it is so vitally important that this message be sent,

especially as the insurgency only intensifies in the region. Brookings

Institute and others who have polled find that 47 percent of the people

in Iraq believe that it is okay to kill Americans. It is time that we

send a clear message. That is why we come to the floor on successive

evenings to send a clear message to the American public about what is

transpiring before our eyes.

We pause, as I said earlier, both in somber and peaceful resolution

that this conflict can be resolved speedily and we especially pray for

those Americans who need to be evacuated from harm's way.

Madam Speaker, I am joined this evening by several of my colleagues

who have come to this floor on repeated occasions to talk about a new

direction that is needed in the Middle East, a new direction that needs

to be taken by this Congress, a new direction that needs to be taken by

this President, so we provide an opportunity for this great country of

ours to once again move us forward out of harm's way and into a

peaceful resolution to what has become consistently a quagmire known as

Iraq.

With that, I recognize the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr.

Delahunt).

Madam Speaker, the gentleman makes a great

premise that he asks us to respond to. But what I would like to do, if

I could, is respond by quoting from a column in the New York Times

yesterday by Frank Rich, who said: ``The Bush doctrine was a doctrine

in name only, a sales strategy contrived to dress up the single mission

of regime change in Iraq with the philosophical grandiosity worthy of

FDR. There was never any serious intention of militarily preempting

either Iran or North Korea whose nuclear ambitions were as naked then

as they are now, or striking the countries that unlike Iraq were major

enablers of Islamic terrorism. `Axis of evil' was merely a classier

brand name from the same sloganeering folks who gave us compassionate

conservatism, and `a uniter not a divider.'''

Madam Speaker, with that I would like to yield to my distinguished

colleague from New York (Mr. Bishop).

The gentleman makes an excellent point.

Every time I travel back to my district, the question that more often

than not is raised at every forum, every community gathering, every

town hall meeting is, How is it that the United States could go from a

position in the aftermath, the immediate aftermath of September 11th,

with having the entire world on our side, to the point where we are

today where so many are opposed to our policies?

What is it that took us down that perilous course? How could it be

that the former President, Bush the first, if you will, and his

advisers, were the most outspoken critics about going into Iraq,

warning this current administration of its folly, of its danger?

I can remember very distinctly being in Saudi Arabia with Jack Murtha

and talking to our Ambassador there, and saying to him that, oh, it

seems as though you have a gathering storm here in Saudi Arabia, in

August of 2002.

He said, gathering storm? He said, Congressman, you are from New

England, aren't you? I assume you either read the book or saw the

movie. He says, we have over 35 percent unemployment. We have a median

income that has dropped from 28,000 to under 7,000 per household. What

we have here is not a gathering storm, what we have here is a perfect

storm.

If we preemptively strike this toothless tiger in Iraq, we will

unwittingly accomplish what Osama bin Laden failed to do. We will

create a united Islamic jihad across the Middle East and drive it into

chaos. The voices of reason, the voices screaming out at the time were

Snowcroft, Eagleburger, Baker, Kissinger, all warning against this

folly.

Yet as you point out, we persisted.

That is what the General Accountability

Office says as well. The GAO report calls for a new direction in Iraq.

The GAO report of July 11 says that the administration's national

strategy for victory in Iraq is questionable and victory cannot be

achieved without significant change in the President's current stay-

the-course strategy. It is unclear, it goes on to say, how the United

States will achieve its desired end-state in Iraq, given the

significant changes in assumptions underlying U.S. strategy.

Will the gentleman yield?

The gentlemen, I think, words of both my distinguished colleagues

from Massachusetts and Maryland are summed up very well in Frank Rich's

article yesterday when he said, This Presidency never had a vision for

the world. It, instead, had an idea fixed on one country, Iraq, and in

pursuit of that obsession, recklessly harnessed American power to a

gut-driven improvisation and PR strategies, not doctrine, that has not

changed, even now.

And with that, let me at this point recognize our colleague, the

distinguished lady from Texas, who has also come to the floor this

evening.

Madam Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for

joining us again and again pointing out that she, like so many of us,

has said good-bye to troops, mainly to Reservists and members of the

National Guard who have been deployed and redeployed, and our hearts go

out to their families and, as we have at the outset at the end of every

one of these Iraq Watches, spoke about the difference between the

warriors and the war, and we continue to salute them. And I thank the

gentlewoman from Texas.

We only have a few more minutes, and I want the gentleman from

Massachusetts and the gentlewoman from California to have the

opportunity to close. But I do want to thank the Members for coming

down here from New York and Maryland, Texas, California, and

Massachusetts and say to the American people that we come here out of

love of country. It is because of love of country and because we are

more often than not denied a voice on this floor, not only denied a

voice on this floor but in the committees, where oversight and review

is so important.

Why is that so, you might ask? It is so, unfortunately, because this

is a one-party town where our erstwhile colleagues on the other side

are in control of the House of Representatives, the Senate, and the

executive branch of government. And they are able to shut off debate

and stifle this side of the aisle even from coming forward with

alternative resolutions on matters so important.