I thank my colleague from Connecticut, and thank him

for his leadership on this very important issue of national security,

and thank my colleagues Mr. Delahunt and Mr. Bishop of New York for all

of their leadership.

I would just like to pick up where Mr. Delahunt and others left off

with respect to the forgotten war in Afghanistan. I do think it is

important, when we look at the situation in the world today, and we

look at the violence erupting in the Middle East, we do remember what

happened here in the United States back on September 11, 2001, and the

origins of that attack.

As he reminds us, the attack on the United States, September 11,

2001, came from al Qaeda, al Qaeda that was sheltered by the Taliban

government in Afghanistan; and that the world was with us when we

responded, fully and forcefully, to those attacks of September, 2001.

In fact, the United Nations unanimously passed a resolution

supporting us, our NATO allies universally supported us. In fact, they

enacted a charter, part of a NATO charter saying an attack on one was

an attack on all.

Yet today we are seeing in Afghanistan there has been a resurgence of

Taliban activity, and at a very time when we are facing that

resurgence, the United States is not providing a commitment that we

need to make sure that we succeed against those who began and

perpetrated the attacks of September 11, 2001.

Back then, instead of focusing on that battle against those who

attacked us, we did divert our resources and our energy in Iraq.

The President gave a number of reasons back then for the action we

were taking. We remember well the twin pillars of the argument. He

said, well, they have got weapons of mass destruction. Many of us said,

let's let the U.N. inspectors have a little more time to see whether

that is true or not true.

The President said, no more time, we are going in. He also said there

was collaboration between al Qaeda and the regime of Saddam Hussein in

Iraq. The 9/11 Commission and many others have proven that that is not

true either.

But it is important to remember that the President also advanced some

other reasons for going to war in Iraq. One of the arguments he made

was by the United States going to Iraq. By invading Iraq, we would help

build stability in the Middle East, that we would promote democracy in

the Middle East, that we would reduce the influence of the hardliners

in the area and increase the influence of the moderates.

In fact, just a few weeks before the invasion of Iraq, in a speech

before the American Enterprise Institute, here is what the President

had to say. I think it is important to reflect on his words then as we

look now at the terrible violence erupting in the Middle East.

He said then, and this was one of the rationales he gave us for going

to war in Iraq, success in Iraq could also begin a new stage for Middle

Eastern peace and set in motion progress for a truly democratic

Palestinian state. The passing of Saddam Hussein's regime will

deprive terrorist networks of a wealthy patron that pays for terrorist

training and offers rewards to families of suicide bombers, and other

regimes will be given a clear warning that support for terror will not

be tolerated. That was a word of his to Iran and others.

Without this outside support for terrorism, Palestinians who are

working for reform and long for democracy will be in a better position

to choose new leaders.

Well, in fact, what has happened in the Middle East, since the

invasion of Iraq is the opposite of what the President has said.

We know now that when we invaded Iraq, we took the lid off Pandora's

box, that we set in motion longstanding grievances within different

groups within Iraq, the Sunnis, and Shiias and the Kurds, and that

outsiders exploited the mess that was created in Iraq, and al Qaeda,

that had never operated out of Iraq, did become active in Iraq.

In fact, what happened was our invasion of Iraq strengthened the

hands of extremist groups throughout the region. It made it more

difficult for the more moderate Arab governments to support the United

States, because people in their countries saw that the United States

had invaded Iraq, and they said there was no reason for this war of

choice against Iraq.

The big winner, the big winner, of course, as Mr. Delahunt pointed

out, has been Iran. Iran has very successfully exploited the chaos and

the vacuum that has been created in Iraq as a result of the mess there.

They have gone into Iraq. They have many agents there, and they, as we

know, are also exploiting the feelings of others throughout the region,

especially Hezbollah. They have provided missiles to Hezbollah,

missiles that are now being used to rain down on northern Israel.

Iran, Iran, as a result, has become much more of a power in the

region. Iran, one of the other countries the President named as the

axis of evil, has, in fact, been strengthened by the President's

decision to go to war in Iraq.

You just need to read the comments of other Arab leaders in the

region, from some of the more moderate Arab countries who say today,

they ask, this is quoted in The New York Times, Who is benefiting,

asked a senior official of one of the Arab countries, critical of

Hezbollah. Definitely not the Arabs or the peace process, but

definitely the Iranians are benefiting

Arab leaders have long been concerned about Iran, and the great irony

of our invasion of Iraq is it has greatly strengthened the hand of Iran

and greatly strengthened the hands of the extremists in the region who

have been fueled by the antagonism that is unleashed toward the United

States and the West by our actions there.

Well, I think that is absolutely right. You see this

whole shift, overnight, in world opinion, again from the world being on

our side and willing to fight alongside us in the war on terror that

had been precipitated by the attacks of Osama bin Laden and al Qaeda.

That was one day.

After the invasion of Iraq that turned out to be based on totally

false premises, you saw the world turn against us. Some people here

ask, Why does it matter whether people around the world like us or

support our policies? Why does it matter if people in the Middle East

have a positive view of the United States? Why does it matter if the

Islamic world has a positive view of the United States?

Well, here is the problem. If you don't have the support of those

countries, it is very difficult to get their cooperation in the war on

terror. It is very difficult for them to say we are going to help you

in the United States in this battle on terror. That is one problem.

The other problem is, it is a total contradiction between our efforts

to promote democracy in the region, on the one hand, and to say we

don't care what the people in those countries think, on the other hand.

Because if we want to promote democracy, which means that we want

leaders in the region to be elected by the people, then we better make

sure that the people who are electing them support our goals and

support our objectives.

Because if the people who are electing the leaders in Middle East

countries hate the United States and want to bring harm to the United

States, it is very difficult for someone running for office there to

say they support our efforts and support our policy.

You saw the election in the Palestinian areas of Hamas and the

extremists as opposed to the Palestinian Authority. The Palestinian

Authority had said, we want to work with the United States, and we want

to work with Israel toward a peace process. But the people, when they

had a choice, for all sorts of reasons chose the more extremist Hamas.

So the perceptions of the United States and our policies overseas

have a direct bearing on our own security here at home. You cannot say

you want to promote democracy in the Middle East, on the one hand, and

say you don't care if they hate America, on the other hand.

If they hate America, they are going to elect leaders who reflect the

will of the people, and that is bad for the United States, and yet our

actions have fueled that kind of antagonism and hatred and actually

made us less, not more, secure.

Would the gentleman yield?

The sad part about so much of this is that so much of it was

foreseeable, if only the President and the White House had listened to

people who knew what they were talking about in this very important

foreign policy area.

I quoted earlier this evening the words of the President in a speech

that he gave at the American Enterprise Institute on the eve of going

to war in Iraq, when he talked about the fact that our invasion of Iraq

would create a new era of stability in the region. It would help create

a domino effect of creating new democratic movements in the region. It

was sort of the big bang of creation of democratic governments in the

region. That was what the President said.

But the fact of the matter is at the same time the President gave

that speech, the experts were telling him the opposite, and yet they

were ignored because their advice did not fit the decision that

President and some of his advisers had made.

Just a month ago, Paul Pillar, who was the head of the Bureau of Near

East and South Asia at the Central Intelligence Agency at the time of

the invasion, testified; and here is what he told the Congress just

recently. He told the Congress that what is happening was, in fact,

predicted in the national intelligence estimate of that time. Here is

what he said. And on the situation, this is his testimony about a month

ago. And on the situation that would be faced in post-Saddam Iraq, the

Intelligence Community produced, on its own initiative, its assessment

of the likely challenges there. It presented a picture of a political

culture that would not provide fertile ground for democracy, and

foretold a long, difficult, and turbulent transition. It forecasted in

a deeply divided Iraqi society there was a significant chance that

sectarian and ethnic groups would engage in violent conflict unless an

occupying power prevented it. It also assessed that the war and

occupation would boost political Islam, increase sympathy for terrorist

objectives and make Iraq a magnet for extremists from elsewhere in the

Middle East.

This is the assessment of the Central Intelligence Agency before we

went to war in Iraq. The people who knew the region, the people who

understood the consequences of an invasion were ignored by this White

House.

So we have to ask ourselves, where is the accountability in this

system?

From day one in this administration, the people who got it wrong have

been rewarded, and the people who got it right have been ignored. And

yet what this administration says to us is ``Trust us.'' Just stay the

course. More of the same.

Well, we have had years of failed policy. No one has been held

accountable. What do we expect in the years ahead and the days ahead

and the months ahead from an administration that refuses to hold those

who get it wrong accountable and ignores all those who get it right?