Mr. Speaker, my colleagues and I tonight have come to the

floor in a continued series of discussions that we have styled as the

Iraq Watch. We, unfortunately, have had to be involved in this now for

several months. We do so because we believe very strongly that this

situation in Iraq is of such high challenge that the U.S. Congress owes

an obligation to be involved in the tough decision making and not just

punt to the executive branch of the United States Government. We

believe that there are some serious issues that need discussing, and we

intend to do so tonight.

But before we get to some of the controversial issues that need

discussion, I think it is important to note the unanimity that this

country has and the total bipartisanship we have in three or four very

central elements in this challenge pertaining to Iraq, and I want to

list four of those.

First, all of us are dismayed and appalled at the savagery of the

United States contractor who was executed in a horrendous act that

Americans are seeing and hearing about on their television screens

tonight. I think it is important for us to recognize the sense of

outrage that we need to maintain as a healthy sense, and not to give it

up and say it is another act of violence. We need to retain our sense

of outrage at their behavior.

Second, we have a bipartisan consensus in this country that we are

dismayed and disturbed by the occurrences in our prisoner of war camps.

Today, as Members of Congress, we join in a bipartisan way,

unfortunately, to review the incredibly disturbing still pictures and

videotapes which still have not been released of some of the things

that went on in the prison camps.

There is a bipartisan recognition that those actions damaged our

potential success in Iraq and that we in a bipartisan way want to find

a way to make sure that never happens again because we have too many

challenges already in Iraq to add to those challenges by self-inflicted

wounds. Third, we have a national consensus that extends our feeling of

loss to many of the innocent Iraqis who have found themselves in harm's

way as a result of this action. Fourth, and perhaps this is the most

important for us to reiterate, in any discussion of Iraq, there is

absolute unanimity across this country in expressing pride and respect

for the heroism and the professionalism of our troops in the field in

Iraq. No matter what we say tonight about the civilian leadership who

unfortunately we believe have made some very grievous errors to our

soldiers' disadvantage, it is very important to realize there is total

consensus in this country and in the House of Representatives

respecting the dedication of our troops, notwithstanding the difficulty

in the command and control structure that happened in these prisons.

Those are four points of consensus and unanimity that we have in this

country that we intend to make sure we note.

With that, I would like to turn to some of the challenging things

that we need to talk about tonight, if I may, if the gentlemen will

give me a few moments. The unfortunate truth is, however, that the

professionalism of our soldiers in the field, hundreds of thousands of

whom are serving with distinction, has not been matched by some of the

civilian decision makers pertaining to the Iraqi operation. There,

unfortunately, have been a series of substantial errors which have

posed challenges to us that now we have to dig ourselves out of. I want

to mention 10 of those very quickly in summary form to set the

framework for our discussion tonight. There are 10 serious mistakes,

errors, of judgment and negligence that have been made by our civilian

authorities in the executive branch of this government which are now

putting us in a very, very deep hole, of what was already a challenging

position. I will quickly summarize those 10 that we will discuss

tonight.

First, the United States Government told the American people in

unequivocal terms that there was, and I think I quote from the chief

executive, no doubt but that Iraq possessed and was deploying some of

the most lethal weapons systems devised by man before this war. That

statement unfortunately has proved to be false. It is one that we

should think seriously about as we move forward in Iraq.

Second, the executive branch and the civilian authorities of our

Nation told the American people in unequivocal terms that there was a

clear, convincing and cogent connection between Iraq and the heinous

attack on our Nation of September 11. That assertion after months and

over a year of digging has not turned out one solitary shred of

evidence to substantiate that assertion; and as far as we know tonight,

that assertion was false. Why is it important to recognize the falsity

of those two assertions preceding this war? It is important to

understand both the Iraqis' response and the world's response and now

our difficulty in obtaining assistance for our troops in the field

because the war started on two basic falsehoods, and this is a

recognition that we have to have as we form a strategy to have success

in Iraq.

The third issue. We were told in very clear terms and this Congress

was told in many briefings that we would be welcomed as liberators, we

would be welcomed with rose petals at our feet. The savagery that our

men and women who are serving in Iraq have seen was hardly a sense of

liberation. Why is this important? It is important because it explains

some other failures by the civilian leadership in our Nation.

It explains the fourth failure, the failure to have adequate troops

on the ground at the time the Iraqi Army collapsed. We had multiple

truth-tellers who told the truth to the executive branch, what was

needed in Iraq; and they have all been fired. General Shinseki told the

President of the United States and the Secretary of Defense that we

would need several hundred thousand troops on the ground to prevent

Iraq becoming an infested place of looting and anarchy the day after

the Iraqi Army collapsed. He was ignored and then fired.

General Zinni essentially said the same thing. He was ignored, then

he was fired. We have seen this as a consistent pattern of truth-

tellers about Iraq. When Joe Wilson blew the whistle on the falsehood

we heard from that Speaker's rostrum during the State of the Union, his

wife had her job diminished by secretly outing her as a member of the

CIA. The sad fact is advice given to the civilian authority has not

been followed.

The fifth error. We knew that to bring democracy to Iraq, we need to

bring democracy to Iraq. The way to bring democracy to Iraq is to have

elections. The first proconsul we had, Jay Garner, said, let's have

early elections; we might get the Iraqis to buy into this system. He

was fired. He was let go. The successful example in southern provinces

of Iraq which has had successful elections is now not being followed,

and we have no idea from the plan from the administration when that may

occur. We need elections in Iraq.

The next error. We have failed wholly to build an international

assistance for our troops. This needs to be an international

responsibility. American taxpayers should not be the only ones footing

the bill in Iraq. In fact, the rest of the world footed the bill for

the first Persian Gulf War under the first President Bush. Now the

American taxpayer is paying this almost lock, stock and barrel both in

blood and in treasure.

The next error. We consciously sent, and when I say ``we,'' I mean

the executive branch in the United States, consciously sent American

men and women into battle without armor. We knew we were sending people

into the warren's den of RPGs, rocket-propelled grenades, improvised

explosive devices; and we sent them in these little thin-skinned

Humvees to drive around for a year and a half, and we have had over 700

lost Americans, many of whom because we did not have adequate armor in

the field. Now, yesterday, when we went through the streets of Baghdad,

we went in armored personnel carriers and we did not lose anyone, which

are impervious to rocket-propelled grenades and a lot of IEDs. We

ignored the clear advice that we needed a stronger, more well-armored

force in Iraq, and we lost sons and daughters because of it. I will say

a good thing for this administration, they are now finally beginning to

rush to this battlefield as fast as they can the armor we need.

The next error we had, I think it is number seven, we did not even

have body armor for these people. We did not have flak jackets.

Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend for the calculated and

exact improvement of my discussion.

It is. And, Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for

leading on this issue about this flak jacket failure.

I do want to make the point, though, I think the administration has

made some changes in its policy that are starting to move in the right

direction, but they are a year, and we have suffered dramatically as a

result of that. We welcome these changes that we are seeing now. Now

the President says now he wants the U.N. to come in and help us. But

frankly it is very difficult, after we stuck our finger in the eye of

the rest of the world, to encourage people. But we want to encourage

the administration to move.

And I will just mention two other things, and then I will yield to my

colleagues. Two other areas: One, this administration has not proposed

a single plan on how to pay for this war. Every single dollar that is

being spent in this war is coming out of the backs and the futures of

our children of deficit spending. We have a $500 billion deficit, and

this President was not forthright enough with Americans to even put in

his budget one dollar for the Iraq War, knowing that every dollar he

put in the Iraq War would be additional deficit spending.

Winston Churchill said, ``All I have to offer you is blood, sweat,

toil, and tears.'' We cannot now just tell the people of America let us

fight the Iraq War and then go shopping. We cannot simply have the only

people sacrificing in America those in the frontlines of Iraq. This is

a tough battle, and the President of the United States cannot fight it

on the cheap. We need to face the difficulty in Iraq straightforward

and have the tenth thing we need, and then I will yield.

We need something we have not had for 1\1/2\ years now. We need a

plan for success in Iraq, and we still do not have one this late in the

game. And the reason I say that is tonight, as we are sitting here,

supposedly we are going to have a turnover to a sovereign government in

Iraq on June 30 and no one has a clue who they will be, no one has a

clue what they will do, and the sad fact is the only thing this Iraq

group is going to do is issue library cards because, frankly, we are

running Iraq because we are the only force that is capable of doing

that right now. We need a plan. We need some fresh thinking. I have

some thoughts I will describe a little later.

I yield to the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. Delahunt).

Reclaiming my time, I just wanted to note, following the

horrendous situations in our prison camps, a lot of folks thought the

only reason people were calling for the Secretary of Defense's

replacement was that problem. But that was only the straw that broke

the camel's back. We had all these other 10 problems which I alluded

to, all of which he was involved with. That is why many Members here

believe that this Nation deserves better to serve our troops.

I would like to yield to the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr.

Hoeffel), the originator of this, who shows great leadership on being

able to tackle these very great problems in Iraq.

Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman will yield for just a

moment, and then I want to yield to the gentleman from Pennsylvania

(Mr. Hoeffel). One of the unfortunate reasons there has been a failure

here is that there is a persistent practice or habit in this

administration to ignore a principle of leadership, which is to reward

competence and to sanction incompetence, to reward those who are right

and sanction those who are wrong, to reward those who tell the truth

and sanction those who do less than that. And look what happens in this

situation.

Let us compare those who were wrong to those who were right. Those

who were right, General Shinseki, right about needing new troops,

canned. General Zinni, who was right

about needing more armor and troops, canned. Ambassador Joseph Wilson,

by the way, stood up personally to Saddam Hussein and saved hundreds of

American lives to get them out of Iraq before the first Persian Gulf

War, this guy has guts; he told the truth and pointed out that what the

President told the American people about buying uranium from Niger was

a falsehood, he told the truth, and they tried to destroy his wife's

career in the CIA.

So we have three truth-tellers, all of them who were punished by the

executive branch of the United States.

Now, look at the other three people. George Tenet, CIA, who, if there

was a more massive failure of information in American history next to

calling Benedict Arnold a good American, I do not know what it was;

still on the job, has not been sanctioned. He has not lost an hour of

vacation time. He does not have a pink slip, does not have a slap on

the wrist, said by the President to be doing a great job, when we

started a war based on false information.

Donald Rumsfeld, the man who ignored General Shinseki, ignored

General Zinni, ignored the intelligence from Ambassador Joe Wilson,

involved in a war where we have incompetent planning, failure of

planning, and we are now in a deep morass in Iraq, called by the Vice

President, and I want to quote here almost, the greatest Secretary of

Defense America has ever seen.

We have a different opinion. This gentleman has not been

sanctioned. This gentleman has not lost an hour of overtime.

And if I can remember who the third one is, if I can read

my notes here that I wanted to talk about. Help me out, gentlemen. Who

is the third one I was thinking about here? The list goes on and on.

Mr. Speaker, I wanted to make sure that we include this

gentleman in this discussion: Assistant Secretary Paul Wolfowitz told

this Chamber on repeated occasions he was dead right sure, not only

that we would be greeted as the great liberators of the Mideast,

spreading democracy through the Mideast, not only that that would

happen but, bonus time, I say to my colleagues, the Iraq oil fields

would pay for this whole thing. American taxpayers would not have to

put out a dime for this. He came and told us he knew this was going to

happen, we would not have to do anything with taxes, taxpayers would

not have to pay a dime. If there has been a greater failure of

analysis, I do not know what it could possibly be.

Now, what has the President done to the man who totally misled the

United States Congress? On both sides of the aisle, by the way, he told

this to Republicans and Democrats. Nothing. So we have the three people

who have gotten us into a war based on false information with lousy

planning, with incompetent preparation for our troops, people losing

their lives in Iraq who are greeted as the greatest civil servants in

human history, and the three guys who told us the truth were fired,

lost their jobs.

I yield to the gentleman from Pennsylvania.

Mr. Speaker, we have about 30 seconds, and I just wanted

to wrap up and thank the gentleman for his work tonight. I just want to

say one thing. One of the worst possible things that can happen to our

soldiers is base the war on wishful thinking. And the failures we have

been talking about tonight have largely occurred because of civilian

decision makers who have based decisions on wishful thinking that are

not in touch with the reality and the difficult situation in Iraq. We

are very hopeful that this administration will start to recognize the

challenges we have in Iraq and start listening to military advisers,

rather than basing their decisions on the fantasy that they have that

this can be done on the cheap. We have paid too dearly in blood for

that misassessment, we have paid too dearly in treasure for that

misassessment; and it is time for a fresh, new strategy in Iraq. Just

sticking with the same old same old is a recipe for disaster.