Mr. Speaker, I rise this evening as we

come to the floor again as part of what we have come to call our Iraq

Watch, and I am grateful that we are joined by several colleagues this

evening, Mr. Bishop from New York, Mr. McDermott from Washington State,

and others that will be joining us throughout this early part of the

evening.

Now, let me start, as we always have, by recognizing the valiant

service of the men and women who wear the uniform. And as our leader

Ms. Pelosi often says, our men and women who wear the uniform deserve a

leadership that is worthy of the sacrifice that they make on a daily

basis. I am proud of this Congress, inasmuch as it has been able to

distinguish the warriors from the war, and so we continue to honor

those brave men and women who wear the uniform of this country and who

sacrifice daily on our behalf.

And yet, as events unfold around the globe, but specifically in the

Middle East as it relates to Iraq, what we find is even amongst those

who initially favored the war, such as pundits like Thomas Friedman,

who now have come to say that we have got to come to the realization

that we are no longer midwifing democracy in Iraq but, in essence,

babysitting an insurgent civil war. So this evening we come here to

discuss Iraq from the context of the mistakes that have been made and

the need for accountability, starting with the resignation of the

Secretary of Defense.

At some point, somewhere along the line, there has got to be

accountability for the actions that have transpired in Iraq. We were

wrong about the information that led up to going into the war. In fact,

the strongest critics against us going into the war were people such as

Scowcroft, Eagleburger, Kissinger and Baker, hardly left-leaning

liberals, but people who understood international policy and the severe

consequences that would result if we ended up going into Iraq without

the full support of the world. And so Americans everywhere kind of have

to scratch their heads and say, how is it that we had the entire world

with us when we invaded Afghanistan and end up virtually with no

support in Iraq.

It is clear from discussions with policymakers and former generals

that a series of mistakes have been made, not the least of which was

going against our own national policy, the Weinberger Doctrine, which

stated very clearly the United States should never go to war against

another country unless its vital interests are threatened; and the

Powell corollary to that, if we do go in, we should go in with

overwhelming force.

In both cases, that doctrine and corollary were rejected in favor of

the doctrine of preemption and unilateralism, which has left our allies

looking at us as we twist slowly in the winds of Iraq, as Friedman

says, babysitting an insurrection and civil war while our most precious

of resources, our men and women who serve this country, are in harm's

way.

We need a new direction. We ought to send a very clear signal to the

world, to the people in this country that it is time for

accountability; that it is time to say that mistakes were made and then

move on. And we can start with Defense Secretary Rumsfeld stepping

down, as he should.

The head of the 9/11 Commission has indicated to both Republicans and

Democrats alike that we need to continue to adopt those resolutions and

recommendations that they have found in their studies, 20 of which

still aren't implemented, which is over half. And so in order to

prosecute the war on terror, we have got to be able to accomplish those

goals. But without a Congress that wants to hold the President

accountable, that is not going to happen.

A gentleman that has been doing just that and speaking out in his

district has been Tim Bishop of New York, and at this time, I would

like to yield to him.

If the gentleman will let me ask a

question, knowing you are from New York and knowing specifically you

are from Long Island, and, of course, with a solemn date approaching us

of September 11, do most citizens in New York understand, in your

estimation, the difference between the war on global terrorism and the

war in Iraq and see

them as different subject matters, or, as Ike Skelton on the Armed

Services Committee has been so nobly trying to demonstrate, the

difference between the insurrection and civil war in Iraq and the war

on terror? Or has the administration's attempts to blur the lines

confused people? What is the sense of New Yorkers?

We have been joined by the gentleman from

Massachusetts. I think for a number of our listeners, really the whole

idea for coming to this floor came from Bill Delahunt. The idea really

wasn't hatched here on the floor of the House of Representatives. It

was an idea that was hatched in town hall meetings in Nantucket and on

the Cape that Bill Delahunt held. He encouraged other Members,

including myself, who had them in West Hartford and Manchester,

Connecticut, and from there, because our voices were muffled. Or if you

spoke out against the war, you were deemed unpatriotic. But it was

because of his efforts in organizing an Iraq Watch that this has

persisted and the truth has been able to continue to come out with

regard to our involvement.

At this time I yield to the gentleman from Massachusetts, the founder

of this great movement.

I would like to ask the gentleman a

question: What you are telling me and you are telling our viewing

audience this evening, you voted, and I believe the vote was near

unanimous in the House of Representatives and the Senate, to invade

Afghanistan in Operation Enduring Freedom; is that correct?

Was not the rest of the world united in

that effort with the United States?

So how is it then, given all that you have

said, that with the world behind us in support of Operation Enduring

Freedom, that we would, if you will excuse the phrase, why did we ``cut

and run'' in Afghanistan and then focus on Iraq?

As the gentleman from New York pointed out, people are able to

distinguish between the enemy who actually knocked down the Twin Towers

in New York, struck the Pentagon, and, as Tim Roemer pointed out

yesterday, were it not for those brave souls on Flight 93, would have

hit this Capitol. How did we go from the whole world being behind us,

abandoning what has become, as Mr. Van Hollen often points out, the

forgotten front in Afghanistan, take our eye off the prize and expend

the amount of money, and, most importantly, our most precious resource,

our men and women who serve this country in Iraq?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The President has

asked to engage, and the gentleman made several good points and one of

them was about a new dialogue, long overdue, and I think welcomed by

the American people. But as the gentleman from Maryland points out, a

one-way street.

Certainly no one knows better than the gentleman from Washington

State. No one was vilified more, both on this floor and in public,

because of love of country and speaking out, than Jim McDermott.

I recognize the gentleman from Washington State.

Is the gentleman suggesting that the more

than $9 billion that is unaccounted for, that this Congress actually

ought to go and find out what happened with those no-bid contracts, $9

billion?

The gentleman from Maine who has been to

the floor several times to talk about this very subject recently

traveled to New Orleans also where he traveled with the Army Corps of

Engineers where he saw firsthand what was going on there. As the

gentleman from Washington states, one of the many salient points he

made is the lack of accountability and the corollary between what has

happened here domestically with Hurricane Katrina and Iraq.

I yield to the gentleman from Maine (Mr. Allen).

The gentleman from New York started and

began this conversation by talking about what has transpired, and the

gentleman from Maryland talked about the President and his calling over

the last several days, both he and the Secretary of Defense and the

Vice President have been out there, along with the Secretary of State,

talking about this new agenda, and I believe the gentleman from New

York has some thoughts on that.

What is the Congress's report card again?

And we are approaching the fifth

anniversary.

Are any of those issues going to be

brought to the floor? Those recommendations, those outstanding

recommendations, will any of them be brought to the floor before we

adjourn for elections?

Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlemen from

Maine, New York, Maryland, Massachusetts, and Washington State for

coming down here this evening.

We come down here out of love of country and the desire to fulfill

our constitutional responsibility. There is no doubt in my mind that

our colleagues on the other side of the aisle love their country as

much as we do.

I cannot understand why an administration continues to attack those

who, out of love of country, speak out and dare to speak truth to

power, that are willing to ask the unimagined questions and perhaps

give unwelcomed answers to the administration. But that is the work

that is required of elected Members of the United States Congress under

our Constitution. That is our sworn obligation to the people of this

great country of ours and will continue to be our obligation.

It is our sincere hope that we can move this Nation in a new

direction. And with a Democratic-controlled Congress, we believe that

is the best hope for our colleagues on the other side to join with us

in creating what is in the best interest of our troops, our families,

and the very security of this Nation.

Thank you, gentlemen, each of you, for joining us this evening.