I thank the gentleman for yielding. I think,

tragically, and I mean this sincerely, tragically those of us who spoke

out early against the invasion in Iraq, because we believed that there

was not significant evidence which established that Iraq was a clear

and present danger to the United States and our allies, we have been

proven to be correct.

Tim Bishop, our colleague from New York, used the term ``abandoned.''

Accusations have been made that some who have criticized the competence

and the rationale of this administration regarding Iraq have

``abandoned'' the war on terror. That is patently false. That is

untrue. There is no relationship between the war against terrorism and

the war in Iraq.

Now, let me put forth a hypothesis: this administration abandoned the

war against terror in a very real way when we were distracted by the

neoconservative vision of invading Iraq, because the consequence of the

invasion of Iraq was in a large degree the diversion of those assets

and initiatives that were necessary to secure Afghanistan, where al

Qaeda had been harbored, where al Qaeda thrived, and where there was an

opportunity to apprehend Osama bin Laden.

But, no, we were more interested in Saddam Hussein, who was an

archenemy of Osama bin Laden. Osama bin Laden considered Saddam Hussein

an apostate, an infidel, an enemy of his version, his perverted

version, of Islam. In fact, in 1994, it was Osama bin Laden who

approached the Saudi royal family and suggested they combine forces and

depose Saddam Hussein because he was an apostate; he was a defiler of

Islam.

So what do we have today? We have a situation in Afghanistan where

the headlines now read: ``A Resurgence of the Taliban.'' That

government that harbored and gave support to Osama bin Laden and al

Qaeda, they are coming back. Another headline in the past 2 days, the

British general who heads the NATO deployment in Afghanistan made this

plea: ``I need more troops or we will lose Afghanistan.''

So who abandoned the war on terror? Who abandoned the war on terror?

Do not confuse the war in Iraq and the war on terror. We all have an

obligation to educate ourselves about the differences, the nuances, the

realities on the ground. This is too important. This is about our

future, and this is about the future of American generations far into

the next decades.

I know my colleague from Maryland who has joined us, Chris Van

Hollen, has a specific interest in Afghanistan. What is happening today

in Afghanistan is a disgraceful example of the incompetence and the

legacy of this administration's policy by going into Iraq.

And what have we achieved? We have achieved a resurgence of the

Taliban and other terrorist elements in Afghanistan. By the way, what

else we have achieved is we have created a new superpower in the

region, Iran. Because while we are standing here discussing among

ourselves this region in the world, let it be very clear to the

American people that there is an emerging warm relationship between

Iran and the new government in Iraq. Do your homework, and you will

discover that there is a bilateral military cooperation agreement that

exists today between Iraq and Iran.

I voted, and, again, with one exception out of 435

Members, there was a unanimous vote here in this Chamber, bipartisan,

Republicans and Democrats and Independent, to go to Afghanistan and

destroy al Qaeda and find Osama bin Laden and apprehend him.

I have this vivid memory of the day after 9/11, a

headline that appeared in the paper of record in France that said: ``We

Are All Americans Today.'' We had support in every corner of the world

for what we were doing. We would have succeeded in the war on terror by

now. But, no. But, no. We invaded Iraq, and clearly that has created

implications for our national security.

If I may just for one moment, and I am not alone when I say this, it

is interesting, today in the Wall Street Journal a former Republican

Speaker of the House of Representatives, Newt Gingrich of Georgia, who

succeeded in securing a majority for the Republican Party in this House

in 1994, was quoted. Remember, this is a Republican, a leader. The

speculation is that he is considering running for the Presidency in

2008.

This is what Newt Gingrich had to say. Just consider the following:

``Osama bin Laden is still at large.'' I agree. ``Afghanistan is still

insecure.'' I would suggest that it is unraveling. ``Iraq is still

violent.'' 3,000 deaths a month. ``North Korea and Iran are still

building nuclear weapons and missiles. Terrorist recruiting is still

occurring in the United States, Canada, Great Britain and across the

planet.''

Those are Newt Gingrich's words, today, in the Wall Street Journal.

Well, if one reviews the memoir of Paul O'Neill, former

Republican Secretary of the Treasury, who served in this Bush

administration for 2 years, and in that capacity was a member of the

National Security Council, you will discover that he was as surprised

as anyone when 10 days after this President was inaugurated at a

National Security Council meeting, there was a discussion about Iraq

and the need to remove Saddam Hussein who, about 6 weeks later on

February 22 of 2001, months before 9/11, there was a meeting when

Secretary Rumsfeld had a map of the oil fields in Iraq spread out on a

table.

The discussion, it was prepared by the Defense Intelligence Agency,

and there was a discussion about how those oil fields would be divvied

up between nations and various big oil companies.

If I can just go back to a point made by Tom Allen. The

lack of accountability, the abrogation, if you will, of this body's

constitutional responsibility to conduct oversight.

We serve on different committees. I happen to be the senior Democrat,

the ranking member, on a subcommittee of International Relations that

is entitled Oversight and Investigations. We have not held one serious

hearing relative to Iraq in the past 2 years. And I know that, prior to

that, for the past 5 years, Iraq has been off the chart in terms of the

committee's considerations. You don't talk about it unless there is

good news.

What I wanted to do was to bring before the committee, not Secretary

Rumsfeld because we have heard enough from him. He is an F. He flunked.

But I wanted to bring before the committee the men that lead our

military and have served in the course of their service to this country

in roles implicating Iraq, in some cases very directly in Iraq.

Not one of these men have ever been invited to any committee in the

Congress so that we would have an opportunity to hear what they had to

say.

So one by one, they felt compelled to speak out themselves and

educate us and the American people as to the truth and the reality of

Iraq and the incompetence of this administration and most specifically

Donald Rumsfeld.

Let me just review a few.

Lieutenant General Greg Newbold, he is the top operations officer for

the Joint Chiefs of Staff. He was involved in the planning. He is

Commanding General, First Marine Division, with Legion of Merit, Navy

and Marine Corps Commendation Medals. He is a highly decorated, well-

respected general. He did not seek a promotion because he felt

compelled to leave. Here is what he had to say.

``What we are living with now are the consequences of successive

policy failures.'' He said that this year.

Major General Paul Eaton, who was given the responsibility but not

the resources to train Iraqi security forces, and we know what a joke

that has been, here is what he had to say, ``Two and a half more years

of that leadership,'' he was referring to Donald Rumsfeld and the

civilian leadership, ``two and a half more years of that leadership was

too long for my Nation, for my Army, and for my family.'' What an

indictment. What an indictment.

Lieutenant General John Riggs, ``They only need the military advice

when it satisfies their agenda.'' When it satisfies their agenda, that

is when they would call in a general and say, This is our agenda, what

do you think, General?

And then General Wesley Clark, ``They pressed for open warfare before

the diplomacy was finished. It was a tragic mistake. It was a strategic

blunder.''