Thank you, Mr. Delahunt, and thank you, Mr. Larson,

and others who are gathered here to talk about these very important

national security questions. As you pointed out, Mr. Delahunt and Mr.

Larson, we have taken our eye off the ball here. As we approach the

terrible fifth anniversary of the tragic attacks of 2001, September 11,

it is important to remember that the attacks upon our homeland were

launched by al Qaeda from Afghanistan and had nothing to do with Iraq,

nothing to do with Iraq.

Yet here, as we gather 5 years later, we have not finished the job in

Afghanistan. We have not finished the job against al Qaeda. Indeed, the

situation is now getting worse today than it was a year ago and even a

year before that.

Now, the President has said in the last 10 days that he wants to have

a national conversation about Iraq and national security, and he has

delivered a number of speeches. But when you listen to what he has had

to say, it is clear that unfortunately once again he is not interested

in the national conversation. Conversation implies a give and take, a

dialogue, an exchange of views.

But when you listen to the President, on the one hand he lays out his

idea of what he wants to go forward and then engages in finger-pointing

and name calling of anybody who disagrees with him. Secretary Rumsfeld

and Vice President Cheney have gone around this country engaging in

name calling and finger-pointing against anyone who disagrees with

them.

They got all the answers, they tell us. You know what? For years and

years they have gotten away with that by the majority in this Congress.

The Republican majority in this Congress has essentially said, yes, you

two have all the answers, and we are going to write you a blank check,

and we are not going to ask you the hard questions.

Well, I am glad the President wants to have a big national

conversation. Let's make this a real conversation on national security.

I say, let's have it, because I think when the American people look at

the facts on the ground, and the fact that this administration has made

our world and our country a much more dangerous place than it otherwise

had to be, that people will ask questions about whose judgment is best

in these matters.

Let us just think back to May 2003 aboard the aircraft carrier USS

Lincoln. The President gave a speech with a big banner behind him,

``mission accomplished,'' mission accomplished. That was May 2003, more

than 3 years ago. We haven't finished the mission in Afghanistan, and

we have got a mess on our hands in Iraq.

Let us just think back to more than a year ago. Vice President Cheney

said that the insurgency in Iraq was in its, quote, final throes, the

last gasp.

Well, we just had a Pentagon report come out a few days ago. Here is

what they had to say about that. In addition to a budding civil war or

a civil war, they say the Sunni-based insurgency remains, quote, potent

and viable.

For years now Secretary Rumsfeld has been giving us these sorts of

rosy scenarios about what would happen in Iraq, and he has been proven

wrong again and again and again.

So when the President and his people say to the American people, we

have got all the answers, I think the American people get it now that

they don't have all the answers. We need to have this debate and this

discussion.

Let me just quickly go back to the issue of Afghanistan, because the

world was with us. We were united as a Nation, we were united as a NATO

alliance, and we were united as an international community. The United

Nations unanimously passed a resolution saying they were with the

United States in its war on terror and its war on al Qaeda.

Yet, today, al Qaeda is still active, they are still plotting, they

are still trying to do harm to Americans and others around the world.

Yet, if you look at what is happening in Afghanistan right now, we have

got to be concerned. The United States is not doing all that it should

in Afghanistan. The major resurgence has occurred in the southern part

of Afghanistan. That has been the stronghold for the Taliban. Yet we

have reduced, reduced, the number of U.S. forces in southern

Afghanistan.

Second, we, the Bush administration, disbanded the only unit within

the CIA whose specific mission was to go after al Qaeda. They said, we

don't need it anymore. That's what they said about a month ago. That

was before the President again quoted Osama bin Laden a few days ago in

one of his speeches for why we still need to be concerned. Well, we

should be concerned. That is why what we are doing in Afghanistan has

not made sense.

Third, we just learned the other day that the opium production in

Afghanistan is at an all-time record, all-time record. We know that the

funds from those sales of those drugs are being used to fuel al Qaeda

and the Taliban.

Finally, finally, we just learned yesterday of this agreement now

between the Government of Pakistan, General Musharraf, has entered into

this agreement with the pro-Taliban militia, and the agreement says we,

the Pakistan military, will now take a hands-off posture along the

northwest frontier, that was the Waziristan part of Pakistan where the

Taliban have regrouped and where al Qaeda has regrouped and what they

have used to launch attacks into Afghanistan.

Now Musharraf is saying, no, that is not what he meant. But it is

very clear he has essentially said Pakistan military isn't coming after

you anymore, you Taliban who are in that part of Pakistan. We have a

hands-off policy. That is simply a signal to them that they can now

more freely operate to try to step up their attacks in Afghanistan,

that they can continue to collaborate with al Qaeda.

So here we are, here we are coming up on the fifth anniversary of

those tragic attacks launched from Afghanistan by al Qaeda because they

were given safe haven by the Taliban, and we haven't finished the job,

and we have reduced the amount of resources that we are committing to

completing the mission. Mission accomplished, nowhere near it