Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from

Massachusetts. Again, Mr. Speaker, as the gentleman indicated, this is

Iraq Watch. Several Members, some of whom voted for the resolution with

respect to the attack in Iraq and some who did not, have been

participating. The reason being that we find ourselves in a situation

today where we are arguing about such things as budget, arguments

taking place right now, both in the Republican Conference and in the

Democratic Caucus. We find ourselves coming up on what might be termed

the anniversary of the Iraq invasion. It is the anniversary. The

question is before us as to what has been accomplished, what was

involved; and I think, Mr. Speaker, I want to set a perspective before

my colleagues and hopefully those in the American public who are

viewing this evening.

There has been an increase, both in terms of discussion and in terms

of reporting about activity on the Pakistan-Afghani border. There is

speculation in the press, speculation in our communities across this

country as to the whereabouts of Osama bin Laden and his cohorts; a

flurry of reporting taking place that there is increased activity,

sensors being placed, special forces being brought together, strike

forces, including Pakistani troops, American troops, CIA operatives.

The question becomes this, Mr. Speaker: Why now? Why has this not been

going on since September 11, 2001? Why is it taking place 6, 8 months

before an election? Where is the justification for what took place in

Iraq as a diversion from going forward on the Afghan-Pakistan border to

capture or eliminate Osama bin Laden and his cohorts? What is the

justification as we come up on the year anniversary of the invasion of

Iraq of not bringing hostilities to a conclusion in Afghanistan and

Pakistan with respect to the attack that was made on the United States?

There is a cover here that the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr.

Delahunt) has to his immediate right from Time Magazine, with a picture

of Mr. Bush facing himself, a mirror image, if you will, that says,

believe it or not, Does Bush have a credibility gap? I cite that not

because I am interested in what Time Magazine has to say by way of cute

phrasing or what they consider to be a provocative title or visual,

but, rather, that the question is one that needs to be answered as we

approach this anniversary of the attack on Iraq. Why are we involved

now in expedited activity and an expedited increase in intense activity

on the Afghan-Pakistan border to capture or eliminate Osama bin Laden?

What have we been doing for the past 2 years?

Well, I can tell my colleagues what we were doing. We were diverting

our attention from those who attacked us on September 11 and instead

preparing ourselves and ultimately carrying through an attack on Iraq,

which has turned into a disaster, an unmitigated disaster for this

country. We have not captured Osama bin Laden, we have not stopped or

eliminated the Taliban threat in Afghanistan, we have not come to a

conclusion with respect to the stability of Pakistan, and we have

created a situation in Iraq which is headed for political, economic,

and social disaster.

Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman would yield on that

point, quoting from Reuter's Monday, yesterday, story about Jeremy

Lovell, quote, ``George W. Bush and Tony Blair probably knew that they

were exaggerating the threat from Iraq when they were making the case

for war, according to former chief U.N. weapons inspector Hans Blix.

The U.S. President and the British Prime Minister ignored the few

caveats and reports from intelligence services on Iraq's nuclear,

chemical or biological weapon programs.''

He writes in his account of the months leading up to the U.S.

invasion. Blix says it was ``Probable that the governments were

conscious that they were exaggerating the risks they saw in order to

get the political support they would not otherwise have had.''

Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman would yield, following

on that point, quoting Mr. Kay, and, again, quoting Mr. Hans Blix, who

was the head of the International Atomic Energy Agency from 1981 until

1997 and later the chief of the United Nations Monitoring Verification

and Inspection Commission until 2003, a person without peer, someone

who has the background and the professional experience second to none

in this area, I quote him: ``I am not suggesting that Blair and Bush

spoke in bad faith, but I am suggesting that it would not have taken

much critical thinking on their own part or on the part of their close

advisors to prevent statements that misled the public. It is understood

and accepted that governments must simplify complex international

matters in explaining them to the public in democratic states. However,

they are not vendors of merchandise but leaders of whom some sincerity

should be asked when they exercise their responsibility for war or

peace in the world.''

Mr. Speaker, I wish that I had a bit more faith in

the idea that there would be a positive response to the questions the

gentleman is posing and the observations that he is making.

The difficulty is we operate in a parallel universe. The Secretary of

Defense is going to filter everything through the medium of his own

perceptions, his own self-delusions. We are not going to see this. This

is going to have to be resolved in the political world in the United

States.

Let me offer this example of the parallel universe that I am speaking

of. In the March 15 Time magazine, an interview has been conducted with

the administrator, Mr. Paul Bremer. Asked, to ``whom exactly are you

handing over sovereignty'' in Iraq? Bremer said, ``The spaces are not

filled in. We will hand over to a sovereign Iraq government on June 30.

The shape and structure of that government is not yet defined. When we

get finished with the transitional administrative law, we will turn to

a broad dialogue with Iraqi politicians, provincial governors, local

councils, ministers, a variety of people to try to figure out the best

and most effective way to bring in the government. We do not know what

that is yet.''

I submit that is such a startling statement of complete incapacity to

understand what it is that is taking place. That is why I say we are

living in a parallel universe. How is it possible for the American

people to have any confidence when they are sending men and women of

the armed services to Iraq, putting them in harm's way as a result of

policies of this administration? How is it possible for us to expect

anything else but the killing and grievous wounding of those military

personnel in such an atmosphere, in which the administrator on behalf

of the government of the United States is saying, ``When we get

finished with the transitional administrative law, we will turn to a

broad dialogue, a variety of people, to try to figure out the best and

most effective way to bring in the government. We do not know who that

is yet.''

The gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. Delahunt) was not at hearings

in the Committee on Armed Services that I attended. I asked the same

question within recent weeks, Exactly what is it that we are doing? Who

are we turning this government over to? What is the authority? And what

is the obligation that we have and our troops have? What authority does

this governing entity that we are turning over to have? What authority

does it have? What obligations does it have? Do we have a status of

forces agreement? And with whom do we have a status of forces

agreement? And whom will enforce the status of forces agreement?

We are coming up on June 30, and yet the press having asked these

questions, at least Time magazine having asked the question, prints it

as if that answer was good and sufficient unto the question. We are

about to engage in a situation in which we are going to have a farce

take place of a presumed turning over of authority with a president,

will he stand up, I do not know if he will get on a carrier, but will

he stand up somewhere on a field in Iraq and say, Mission accomplished

too, because this government has now come into being?

I know what a government is. I think I know what the obligations and

responsibilities of a government are, but I have yet to have a

straightforward, clear-cut answer as to what the relationship of the

United States military, let alone the United States Government, is

going to have with this new governing entity on June 30.

Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman would yield, in 10

days time it will be 1 year.