Mr. Speaker, I rise today to first of all express concern

and sympathy for the people of the southeastern United States for all

the suffering that they have endured because of the hurricanes over the

past few weeks and what may come yet, our hearts, more than that,

though, our intention to help in any way possible. I know that this

Congress will do that. At a time like this the American people look to

the Federal Government. They believe we have a compact with them to

come to their assistance at this time of need, at a time of natural

disaster.

I know this as a San Franciscan being subjected in California to

earthquakes as we are, there is never a time when the public needs us

more in terms of their personal well-being than when they are driven

out of their homes, probably never to return to a situation similar to

what they had before. It is very difficult to be made whole.

So I want to extend on behalf of my constituents and my colleagues in

the Congress an expression of concern and interest in supporting

anything that needs to be done to try to make them as whole as

possible. I extend that to our colleagues who so ably represent their

constituents in the southeastern United States.

Mr. Speaker, I come to the floor today gravely concerned about the

situation in Iraq. As one who served on the Intelligence Committee for

10 years and now ex-officio in my role as leader and as briefed on a

regular basis, as is Speaker Hastert, I have grave concerns not only

about what is happening in Iraq but the denial that the administration

has about what is happening there.

The President took us into this war in Iraq on the basis of unproven

assertions and without evidence; he embraced a radical doctrine of

preemptive war unprecedented in our history; and he failed to build a

true international coalition. Therefore, American taxpayers are paying

most all the cost, over $200 billion by now. More importantly, our

national treasure, our men and women in uniform, are paying the biggest

price of all. Over 1,000 now, 1,027 dead, this being a very bloody

month, and it is not over yet. The cost in lives, and may I also add

over 7,000 injured. Many of those who were injured have injuries for

life. These are not patch-them-up injuries. Injuries for life. One

thousand twenty-seven dead, over 7,000 injuries. The cost in lives and

limb is huge. The cost to the taxpayers is huge, again, approaching a

quarter of a trillion dollars, and the cost of our reputation

throughout the world is immeasurable.

I say right up front that as a 10-year veteran of the Intelligence

Committee, I said at the time of the vote that the intelligence did not

support the threat that the administration was claiming existed in

Iraq. It simply did not. I on the basis of that did not support the

war.

It is interesting to see today yet another confirmation of that. The

Iraq study finds a desire for arms on the part of Saddam Hussein but

not the capacity. He wanted to start a program when the U.N.

restrictions were lifted, but that is a far cry from an imminent threat

to the American people. We

went in under false pretenses. We misled the American people as to the

caliber of the threat and to the association with 9/11.

But let us say that was then and this is now. What is so sad about it

all, as with a preemptive strike, when you choose the timing and the

nature of the war you are going to engage in, you have an additional

responsibility as a country and as a President to be prepared. We sent

our troops into harm's way without the proper equipment, without the

proper intelligence to know the nature of the enemy, and without the

proper training to deal with the aftermath of the fall of Baghdad.

Do not take it from me. The Department of Defense report has said

that 25 percent of those who lost their lives or who were injured would

have been saved if they had the Kevlar lining in their vests, if they

had the armor on their cars and if they had other equipment that could

have protected them. When we asked the administration about this, they

said, ``Well, we just have that for people who are on the front line.''

The front line in a guerilla war, when mortar shells are coming into

the barracks causing some of these fatalities and casualties, that was

a disservice to those troops. We should never ever have allowed that to

happen.

I want to just quote General Zinni on that point. General Zinni was

the former commander-in-chief of the U.S. Central Command, the area

that contains Iraq. He said that in the lead-up to the Iraq war and its

later conduct, he saw, at a minimum, true dereliction, negligence and

irresponsibility. That is at a minimum.

At worst, he saw lying, incompetence and corruption; that is, in the

lead-up to the war.

It did not have to be that way. In fact, regardless of how you voted

on the war or what you thought about the threat, the State Department

very clearly put out an eerily prescient report, Iraq project report,

on what to expect after the fall of Baghdad. The administration chose

to ignore that and did not prepare for what would happen after the fall

of Baghdad.

They told us that our troops would be met by rose petals. Instead,

they are being met by rocket-propelled grenades. They told us, and I

have the dates and the names of those who made these statements, that

this is a country that could well finance its own reconstruction, and

soon. And soon. And we here have given a price tag to the American

taxpayers of over a quarter of a trillion dollars and growing. They

could readily fund their own reconstruction, and soon.

Not only can they not fund it, the security situation in Iraq is so

desperate that they cannot even begin construction. The $18 billion

that Congress appropriated for reconstruction in Iraq as the initial

stage of it, they have only been able to spend just under $1 billion

because the security situation is so bleak. And why is it so bleak?

Because they ignored the advice of those who knew better.

When General Shinseki said that several hundred thousand troops would

be required for the occupation, Secretary Wolfowitz said, ``Wildly off

the mark.'' And what General McCaffrey has said, ``I think we got in

there with a grossly anemic military force. We never defeated the elite

elements of the Saddam regime. They walked away with their guns, their

money and their leadership intact.''

This is such a tragedy, because there was a representation made to

the American people that was not true about the imminence of the threat

and about its association to 9/11. Then we send our troops in without

the proper preparation and risk and have all of these deaths and

casualties. General Zinni further said, ``Where are we, the American

people, . . . if we accept this level of sacrifice without that level

of planning'' that is necessary? How can we ask our young men and women

who are so brave?

The fact that the administration is in denial about the cause, the

reason to go to war, that they are in denial about what is happening in

Iraq does not for one minute diminish the valor of our men and women in

uniform who are in Iraq and Afghanistan, but focusing on Iraq now. We

all agree that we should have gone into Afghanistan. The tragedy of

that is that if our country had stayed focused on the clear and present

danger of terrorism and kept its focus on Afghanistan, here we would be

3 years later. Perhaps we would have caught Osama bin Laden. Whether we

catch him tomorrow or the next day, it is still 3 years too late that

this menace to the world roams, spreading his poison, continuing his

threat to the world.

So if we had stayed focused, instead of overthrowing Saddam Hussein,

we could have rooted out the Taliban; and instead of shooing away some

of the al Qaeda and the rest, they ran for the hills. We could have

been in pursuit. Instead, we turned our attention to Iraq.

So let us go back to Iraq. Now we have a national intelligence

estimate that was given to the President months ago, and it spells out

what the possibilities are in Iraq, and there are no good scenarios. It

is very hard to find any good options on how to proceed in Iraq because

there are no good options. We have a worst-case scenario that they

could end up in civil war by 2005. Everything from there on down is

very bleak for the Iraqi people and very sad as far as our country is

concerned and the sacrifices that our young men and women are going to

have to make there.

So I call on the President of the United States to hold someone

accountable for this policy. Harry Truman said, ``The buck stops

here,'' but I do not see the President taking any responsibility. In

fact, he thinks that the bleak report that the national intelligence

estimate presented was progress, was progress. Let us just say that we

have to have the ground truth about Iraq. What is happening there is

not what the administration is telling us.

Almost 1 1/2 years ago, the President said that the mission was

accomplished, that the end of major combat had come. What was he

talking about? Is this the same judgment that got us into war on

unproven assertions? Is this the same judgment that sent our troops

into war without the proper equipment, training, or intelligence to

know who the enemy was?

The Department of Defense has commissioned a report that says who is

the adversary? Who is the adversary? The American people have to call a

halt to this going along with the rosy scenario because that is a more

pleasant message for them to receive. The President has to speak truth

to the American people as to what is happening in Iraq and what the

risks are to our men and women in uniform whom we respect for their

valor, their sacrifice, and the sacrifices of their families.

This national intelligence estimate has been in the media. That is

the report that I am referring to, the national intelligence estimate

that was in the media yesterday. And what is interesting about it is

that the President had this estimate for months and continued to

misrepresent to the American people, continued to misrepresent to the

American people, what the situation was in Iraq and what we are facing

there. The Bush administration failed to plan for the war and its

aftermath. It failed to send an adequate number of troops to get the

job done. The administration did not properly, adequately protect and

train our troops.

The Department of Defense commission report said: ``A breakdown of

the casualty figures suggests that many U.S. deaths and wounds in Iraq

simply did not need to occur . . . perhaps one in four of those killed

in combat in Iraq might be alive if they had had stronger armor around

them,'' the DOD study suggests.

In relationship to that, another quote about it from the Army Times,

from the Army Times, which stated: ``This was not just a failure of

leadership at the local command level. This was a failure that ran

straight to the top. Accountability here is essential, even if that

means relieving top leaders from duty in a time of war.''

It was interesting to hear Vice President Cheney's comments last

night. As he was speaking, I was thinking of his statement in March of

2003 when he said, ``We will, in fact, be greeted as liberators . . . I

think it will go relatively quickly. . . . weeks rather than months.''

Weeks rather than months? We are into years, and all the projections

are

that we will be there for many more years.

And Secretary Wolfowitz said, ``We had a plan that anticipated, I

think, that we could proceed with an occupation regime for much longer

than it turned out the Iraqis would have patience for. We had a plan

that assumed we'd have basically more stable security conditions than

we've encountered.'' Another example of their poor judgment.

Again, Mr. Wolfowitz, and I will repeat this again because I think

the American people should know, said on March 27, 2003, ``There's a

lot of money to pay for this. It doesn't have to be U.S. taxpayer

money. We are dealing with a country that can really finance its own

reconstruction, and relatively soon.''

How do they face the American people after their misjudgments over

and over and over again?

So I have mentioned that the Pentagon completed March 26 an

intelligence report that was commissioned to answer a simple and

provocative question in Iraq: Who is the adversary? This was in April

of 2004, reporting on a March 2004 report a year after we went in. Who

is the adversary?

So how did this happen? Some people think, and as has been reported

in the paper, that ``no Iraqi leader has had more to do with U.S.

intervention in Iraq than Chalabi, from charming Congress into

authorizing almost $100 billion to back his fledgling Iraqi National

Congress in the late 1990s and convincing Washington about Hussein's

weapons of mass destruction in 2002 to pressing for war last year,''

has said both his supporters and critics. That was in May of 2004. At

that same time, his office was being raided. At that same time, he was

being charged with spying for the Iranians, giving information to the

Iranians. Whom do we trust? Where, again, is the judgment?

``U.S. Intelligence agencies,'' and I will submit all this for the

Record, ``believe that Chalabi, the former Iraqi exile once strongly

backed by some Bush administration officials, may have passed

classified information on the American occupation of Iraq to the

government of Iran, officials said.''

How many more people have to die for us to subject the judgment that

put them in the situation they are in in harm's way? Who is accountable

for this policy? We have a situation where, again, the American people

heard representations that were not accurate about the nature of the

threat. Of course the American people want to support the President of

the United States if they think that our country is in danger. Make no

mistake. If there is a threat to the United States that we can

anticipate, we will make sure that the American people will be

protected.

President Kennedy said it best in his speech, We pay any price, bear

any burden, fight any foe. That is our first responsibility as elected

officials, to protect the American people. So it is not about not

wanting to use force.

The military prepares for war as a last resort. The President chose

to go to war as a first choice, a preemptive strike that was not

prepared for. If we are going to preempt, we have the higher

responsibility to be prepared; and this administration was not.

So it is with great sadness and great concern that I come to the

floor today to express these concerns and to say it would be political

to withhold criticism of the administration for what it is doing for

fear that the American people might think that that is not patriotic.

That is not patriotic? Senator Taft, who would be the majority leader

of the Senate, the Republican majority leader, said that disagreement

in time of war is essential to a governing democracy.

So now we have to see where we go from here. Well, General Hoar, and

let me get this straight and, again, I will submit this for the Record,

General Joseph Hoar too was a former commander in chief of U.S. Central

Command testifying before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on May

20, 2004, said, ``I believe we are absolutely on the brink of failure.

We are looking into an abyss.'' General Zinni said we are heading over

Niagara Falls. The President says stay the course. Stay the course into

an abyss, into Niagara Falls?

Mr. President, face the facts. The Bush administration must stop

being in denial about what they got us into. They did not know what

they were getting us into, even though their own State Department had

given them the report on what to expect, even though their own generals

told them the level of military capacity that we would need to go

there, even though the intelligence did not support the threat that

they were claiming. So now those who criticize or throw a spotlight on

the facts are considered unpatriotic. No, very patriotic and in support

of those troops.

On a regular basis I tried to visit them. I visited with them in Iraq

and in Germany and just earlier this week met with some of the Marines

who had come from Fallujah and other places in Iraq. One of the young

men was blind. Others had amputations. Others had serious injuries, and

hopefully some of them had not so serious injuries. It remains to be

seen.

And every time I see them, I am in awe of the tremendous patriotism

and sacrifice and valor that they have. God has blessed America with

our young people who will go into battle to protect our country. And as

I said, none of the poor judgment and mistakes, grotesque mistakes, of

the administration can diminish the valor and the debt that we owe

these young men and women. I will not even go into the whole subject of

what we are doing to veterans when these folks come back because I want

my focus to be on the war today, but we will be talking about that.

So as we look at them, we think their lives are changed. And these

are the lucky ones who have survived. But these injuries, as I said,

are for life. We owe them more than the President has given them. Some

of the troops still do not have the equipment that would adequately

protect them. They still do not 1\1/2\ years into this war.

I just want to make one more point. And that is the administration is

going around saying, and we heard it at the convention, we succeeded

too soon; so we were not ready for the aftermath of the war, assuming,

as the President declared the war over May 1, 2003, and that they have

had a ``catastrophic success.'' That is the oxymoron of the century,

and it is not even true. They had a catastrophic failure. A

catastrophic failure. They succeeded too soon? They thought, and they

told us, that they were going to take out Saddam Hussein that first

night. They thought they had him holed up someplace in Iraq, and that

is why they had to go in that night to decapitate Iraq, to cut off its

head.

That is when they thought they were going to win. So they actually

did not succeed sooner than they thought. In fact, they have not

succeeded at all.

So let us, at least from this day forward, speak truth to the

American people. When people say, how would so and so do differently,

how would John Kerry do differently, one thing we have to do is

stipulate to a set of facts and not have the misrepresentations that

are coming forth from this administration about what the ground truth

is in Iraq. Let us come together, in as bipartisan, nonpartisan of a

way as we possibly can to say we are in a mess. We are in a mess. I do

not know who the President takes his advice from, or gets his advice

from, or if these are his personal decisions, but somebody has got to

go. For the American people to accept this course of action that is a

catastrophic failure, that is costing us the lives of our young people

and their health and well-being and the well-being of their families,

that is costing us a quarter of a trillion dollars, think of what we

could do with that in America to make us stronger, and it is costing us

enormously in our reputation around the world.

When I was a student, I heard John Kennedy give his inaugural address

here in the freezing cold on the steps of the Capitol, and everybody

knows when he talked about ``ask not what your country can do,'' but

the very next line in that speech was to the citizens of the world, ask

not what America can do for you, but what we can do, working together,

for the freedom of mankind.

There has to be a change in attitude toward the rest of the world,

not the condescension, go it alone, our way or the highway kind of

approach, but an attitude of respect and collaboration and cooperation

among countries for the freedom of mankind. Stay the course? I do not

think so. But we, each

of us, have a responsibility to protect and defend the American people,

to protect and defend our Constitution. That is the oath we take, and

to provide for the common defense is the first responsibility. We take

that very seriously, every single one of us does.

Providing for the common defense means that we use war as a last

resort, as the military prepares for it that we respect what they say

about the capacity that is needed to succeed, that we respect our State

Department when they tell us what to expect on the ground after the

hostilities cease; of course they have not, but if they had paid

attention to the State Department, they might have by now.

Klausewitz said, do not take the first step into war unless you are

prepared to take the last step, and it is clear that this

administration did not know what it was getting into, or else they

grossly misrepresented the facts to the American people. In either

case, staying the course is not an option. We will not leave Iraq until

there is stability, until there is security there. But under the

present plan, there is no end in sight to the chaos, to the quagmire,

to the tragedy that this administration has taken us into.

So again, just today the announcements of more deaths in Iraq, that

it is with great sadness and sympathy for the families of those

affected, just another long list of young people. The other day when I

was there, I was asking them how old they were: 19, 19, 20, 23, the

national treasury of our country, our young people, squandered because

of the poor judgment of this Bush administration.

The Bush Administration's Iraq Policy Poor Judgment, Poor Preparation