Madam Speaker, how can we expect President Bush and his

administration to win the war in Iraq if they continue to deny the

realities our troops and the Iraqi people face on the ground?

Last week provides several examples of a Bush administration in

disarray: Cabinet officials contradicting each other on a daily basis

and a President who continues to live in denial. Not only is the

President in denial, but his hand-picked Iraqi Prime Minister appeared

to be reading off the exact same page when he visited Washington last

week.

During a press conference in the Rose Garden President Bush claimed

that And in this House

chamber last week Prime Minister Allawi echoed the President, reminding

my colleagues President Bush and Prime Minister Allawi can say we are making

progress in Iraq, but the facts simply do not support their claims.

Attacks against Iraqis and U.S. military personnel over the last couple

of weeks are dramatically higher than they were in the weeks after the

handover of power to the interim Iraqi government. Today on average 70

attacks occur on a daily basis, compared to 40 to 50 in July. Over the

past 2 weeks these attacks have killed more than 250 Iraqis and 29 U.S.

military personnel. How in the world is that progress, Madam Speaker?

President Bush also ignores the real dangers surrounding the

scheduled Iraqi elections in January. At his press conference last

week, the President said the elections are still possible based on the

situation on the ground. His reason is

Well, neither the President nor the Prime Minister could provide any

evidence to support their steadfast belief that the January elections

must proceed despite the realities on the ground.

That same day, Iraq's most powerful Shiite leader threatened to

withdraw his support for the elections. And UN Secretary General Annan

also voiced concern that elections may need to be delayed due to

security concerns on the ground.

Madam Speaker, even President Bush's cabinet is providing

contradictory information regarding the January elections. Last week at

a Senate hearing, Defense Secretary Rumsfeld raised the possibility

that some areas of Iraq might be excluded from voting in January.

Secretary Rumsfeld said

That is what Rumsfeld said. Image that.

How could Secretary Rumsfeld conclude that the Iraqi people would

consider such an election legitimate if a significant portion of the

Iraqi people were not allowed to participate?

Fortunately, there has one member of the President's Cabinet that is

not afraid to put aside the President's talking points and speak the

truth. This weekend, Secretary of State Powell refuted the President's

claims that progress is being made in Iraq. Not only did Secretary

Powell say the insurgency in Iraq is getting worse, he also supported

Senator Kerry's contentions that the U.S. occupation of Iraq has

increased anti-American sentiment in Muslim countries.

Secretary Powell also refuted Secretary Rumsfeld's outrageous

statements about the January election. What Powell said is,

Now, I obviously agree with what Secretary Powell says, but it is no

wonder the situation in Iraq is so tenable. We have a President who

either refuses to believe there is a problem in Iraq or does not think

it is a problem to mislead the American people about how serious the

situation currently is.

We also have an administration that never seems to be on the same

page. One cabinet official is saying one thing while another one is

saying just the opposite.

So, Madam Speaker, this is no way to lead a war, clearly. It is a

flawed rationale for the war to begin with, in failing to have a plan

once Baghdad fell, and President Bush's record essentially has not been

good. It has been a failure.

He failed to provide the troops with the equipment they needed, and

he also failed to implement his reconstruction plans in Iraq, and he

has left, essentially, Iraq in chaos. I do not think the world can

afford another four years of this failed leadership on behalf of the

Bush administration.