I thank my friend for yielding. Here we are once more

this evening for the next half hour to talk about the situation in the

Middle East. It seems that we have been doing this now for, I think, 15

or 16 months. We describe it as the Iraq Watch. I understand, also,

that tomorrow night we will be back here shortly before the conclusion

of the legislative business for the day prior to the Vice Presidential

debate which is scheduled for tomorrow night between Vice President

Cheney and Senator Edwards.

Speaking of the Vice President, I remember being somewhat taken aback

by the continued allegation by the Vice President relative to the

relationship between al Qaeda and Saddam Hussein. Of course, just

recently I read again where the Vice President makes allusions to some

sort of link between al Qaeda and Saddam Hussein.

Yes, I will. Of course.

With all due respect to my good friend from California,

I have read the report. I have read it in considerable detail. I agree

with the chairman of the 9/11 Commission after my review of that report

that was done by an independent commission comprised of five

Republicans and five Democrats. In fact, this past June the chairman of

the commission, a former Governor of New Jersey, Tom Kean, had this to

say in an interview that

was broadcast over one of the networks. The report concluded that there

was no operational link between al Qaeda and Saddam Hussein, that it

was absolutely not borne out by any of the evidence that was available

to them. In fact, the former Governor, and let me underscore the fact

that he is a highly respected member of the Republican Party, had this

to say. These are his words, not my words:

``We believe that there were a lot more active contacts frankly with

Iran and Pakistan than there were with Iraq. Al Qaeda did not like to

get involved with states unless they were living there. They got

involved with Sudan. They got involved where they lived. But otherwise,

no,'' he said on ABC's ``This Week.'' I think it is rather clear from

the 9/11 report that there were no links between Saddam and Osama bin

Laden. But again that does not seem to deter the Vice President from

continuing that fiction. But again that does not appear to be unusual

for the Vice President, because it is clear that the Vice President was

one of the more significant influences in the determination to seek the

military intervention with Iraq.

In a review of the book by Bob Woodward that was posted, by the way,

on the Bush-Cheney campaign Web site, there was a particular excerpt

that I thought was very informative about the role of the Vice

President in the effort to convince the American people about the need

to go to war in Iraq. Again, I am reading from an excerpt from that

book by Bob Woodward. It describes the differences between the

Secretary of State, Colin Powell, and his observations and that of the

Vice President. I am now reading:

``Powell thought that Cheney had the fever. The Vice President and

Wolfowitz kept looking for the connection between Hussein and September

11. It was a separate little government that was out there, Wolfowitz,

Libby, Under Secretary of Defense Douglas Feith and Feith's `gestapo

office,' as Secretary Powell privately referred to it. Cheney now had

an unhealthy fixation. Nearly every conversation or reference came back

to al Qaeda and trying to nail the connection with Iraq. He would often

have an obscure piece of intelligence. Secretary Powell thought that

Cheney,'' he is referring to the Vice President obviously, ``took

intelligence and converted uncertainty and ambiguity into fact. Cheney

would take an intercept and say it showed something was happening. `No,

no, no,' Powell or another would say. `It shows that somebody talked to

somebody else who said something might be happening.' A conversation

would suggest something might be happening and the Vice President would

convert that into a `we know.' Secretary Powell concluded we didn't

know and no one knew.''

I think it is unfortunate that, to use the words of Secretary Powell,

that the Vice President had the fever, had a fixation about Iraq and

some sort of operational link with al Qaeda when none existed.

And unfortunately, it has been repeated over and over and over again

so that many Americans accept it, despite the conclusion reached by the

9/11 Commission. It simply did not exist.

My friend from California talks about 1990 and Iraq, and I would

remind my friend from California that, back in 1990, the President's

father, George Herbert Walker Bush, made every effort to forestall

sanctions that were passed by this House prior to the Gulf War that

would have been imposed on Iraq and the Saddam Hussein regime. Not only

is there inconsistency here, but please do not talk about 1990 and

prior to the Gulf War when this government, the United States

Government, under the President's father, George Herbert Walker Bush,

had what only can be described as a special relationship with Saddam

Hussein. Saddam Hussein was taken off the terrorist list in 1984. It

was that administration that installed an embassy in Baghdad in 1986.

It was that administration that provided, if you will, the dual-use

technologies that could be utilized in the development of a nuclear

weapons program to be shipped to Iraq. I mean inconsistency is not a

strong enough word. But maybe this is what prompted Richard Cheney, the

Vice President, to be so obsessed and fixated with Iraq.

The last time we were here, we discussed the need to be forthright

and to acknowledge mistakes and not paint a picture that is simply not

matched by the reality on the ground in Iraq. It is important to heed

the advice of a former member of the administration, David Kay, who was

responsible for finding weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, who was

appointed by the Bush-Cheney administration to do so, and came back and

testified before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that we were

all wrong. Well, we were wrong about the weapons of mass destruction.

We were wrong about links between Saddam Hussein and al Qaeda. And it

is dangerous, let me suggest, to continue to attempt, for whatever

purpose, and I am not impugning the motives or suggesting that there is

a political reason that the Vice President continues to try to maintain

that link because far be it from me to question his motives, but,

again, to quote David Kay, former member of that administration, when

told that the Vice President continued to suggest that weapons of mass

destruction might still be found in Iraq, said the following, ``what

worries me about Cheney's statements is, I think people who hold out

for a hail Mary pass delay the inevitable looking back at what went

wrong.'' I believe we have enough evidence now to say that the

intelligence process and the policy process that used that information

did not work.

Mr. Speaker, reclaiming my time, I just think there is

a certain level of embarrassment because the Vice President has been

proven conclusively to be wrong, not simply out of an investigation

conducted by media, by outside parties, but by an independent

commission established as a result of action in this body here and in

the body across the hall that, if the gentleman remembers, the

administration resisted.

But to continue to try to justify the rationale for the war, he

simply refuses to acknowledge the reality. If only, if only he and

others in the administration would accept the admonition of David Kay,

who was appointed by the President and the Vice President to search for

weapons of mass destruction, if he would just simply concur with David

Kay's statement that we were all wrong, we could then hopefully make

some progress. But we are not going to get that, and we know that.

Again, it is either a deception to mislead or it could

be incompetence. But I do not believe it to be incompetence, because no

one has ever accused the Vice President of being an individual who does

not thoughtfully analyze information. But, again, as Secretary of State

Powell concluded, if you have the fever, and he thought that the Vice

President had the fever, then you are detached from reality.

For the Secretary of State to use the term ``gestapo office'' as an

appropriate description of the separate little government that was

established in the office of Undersecretary of Defense Douglas Feith, I

think says something about the inability of some people to see the

world as it really is, as opposed to what you have decided it to be.

We hear so much about these rosy scenarios that the President and

other members of the administration paint regarding Iraq and what is

transpiring there, and yet when we hear the truth as it is reported by

individuals who do not have a particular ax to grind, such as a

reporter from the Wall Street Journal.

The gentleman from Washington (Mr. Inslee) is, I am sure, an avid

reader of the Wall Street Journal. That is a publication that clearly

is pro-administration, is very conservative.

But here is what a reporter by the name of Farnaz Fassihi says in e-

mails as recently as the 29th of September. ``Being a foreign

correspondent in Baghdad these days is like being under virtual house

arrest. I leave when I have very good reason to and a scheduled

interview. I avoid going to people's homes, and never walk in the

streets. I can't go grocery shopping anymore. I can't eat in

restaurants, can't strike a conversation with strangers, can't look for

stories, can't drive in anything but a full armored car, can't go to

scenes of breaking news stories, can't be stuck in traffic, can't speak

English outside, can't take a road trip, can't say I'm an American,

can't linger at checkpoints. There have been one too many close calls,

including a car bomb so near my house that it blew out all the windows.

I am now a security personnel first, a reporter second.

``It is hard to pinpoint when the turning point actually began. Was

it April when Fallujah fell out of the grasp of the Americans? Was it

when Muqtada al-Sadr declared war on the U.S. military? Was it when

Sadr City, home to 10 percent of Iraqi's population, became a nightly

battlefield for the Americans? Or was it when the insurgency began

spreading from isolated pockets in the Sunni Triangle to include most

of Iraq? Despite President Bush's rosy assessment, Iraq remains a

disaster. If under Saddam it was a potential threat, under the

Americans it has been transformed to an imminent and active threat.''

Mr. Speaker, reclaiming my time, I can assure the

gentleman we will not hear it. Right now it is all about trying to

paint a rosy scenario that is absolutely without any foundation, when

the reality is it is a disaster.