Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

July 10, 2003

The Honorable George W. Bush
President
The White House
Washington, D.C.

Dear Mr. President:

We are writing in reference to your recent acknowledgement that the claim you made in your State of the Union address regarding Iraqi efforts to obtain uranium for nuclear weapons from Africa was based on false information.

On October 10, 2002, we voted for H. J. Res. 114, which authorized you to use U.S. military force if necessary to address Iraq's failure to comply with its disarmament obligations and any imminent threat posed by this failure. H.R. Res. 114 provided, in part, that before you could exercise the authority set forth in the resolution, you first had to make a determination that "reliance by the United States on further diplomatic or other peaceful means alone either (A) will not adequately protect the national security of the United States against the continuing threat posed by Iraq or (B) is not likely to lead to enforcement of all relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions regarding Iraq."

We voted for this resolution in order to give you the leverage that your Administration said it needed to convince the United Nations Security Council to pass a tough resolution providing for on-demand, anywhere-anytime inspections of all of Iraq's suspected nuclear, chemical, biological, and missile sites. On October 16, 2002, you signed H.J. Res. 114 into law (Public Law 107-243). On November 8, 2002, the Security Council then passed Resolution 1441, which provided for such inspections. As a result, by early this year the UN and the International Atomic Energy Agency had assembled inspection teams in Iraq and had begun the process of trying to fully account for all of Iraq's suspected weapons of mass destruction.

Early this year, your Administration initiated U.S. military action to topple the Saddam Hussein regime and forcibly disarm Iraq. In so doing, the Administration cited the intelligence information gathered by the U.S. and allied governments to support the proposition that Iraq was continuing to hide evidence of its weapons of mass destruction programs.

During your State of the Union address, you told Congress and the American people that:

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"The International Atomic Energy Agency confirmed in the 1990s that Saddam Hussein had an advanced nuclear weapons development program, had a design for a nuclear weapon and was working on five different methods of enriching uranium for a bomb. *The British government has learned that Saddam Hussein recently sought significant quantities of uranium from Africa.* Our intelligence sources tell us that he has attempted to purchase high-strength aluminum tubes suitable for nuclear weapons production. Saddam Hussein has not credibly explained these activities. He clearly has much to hide (emphasis added)."

Press reports indicate that your Administration has now acknowledged that the claim that Iraq had recently sought to obtain significant quantities of uranium from Africa was erroneous and was based upon forged documents and already had been discredited by U.S. experts.

This acknowledgement is welcome, but it brings into even sharper focus disturbing and serious questions about the credibility of the information your Administration presented to the Congress and the American public about the nature and scope of Iraqi weapons of mass destruction programs in the months leading up to the initiation of U.S. military operations in Iraq.

Your Administration's recent acknowledgement that at least part of this intelligence was based on faulty and forged information calls into question the claims made regarding the imminence of the security threat posed by Iraqi efforts to obtain prohibited weapons. We would therefore respectfully request that you provide us with responses to the following questions:

1. Exactly how did the claim regarding Iraqi efforts to obtain uranium from Africa get into your State of the Union Speech, in light of the evidence in the possession of the Executive Branch that this claim was based on forged documents?
2. Who within the Executive Branch reviewed and approved the inclusion of this statement in your speech?
3. Did anyone raise concerns about its inclusion? If not, why not? If so, why were such concerns apparently disregarded?
4. Ambassador Joseph Wilson, who was dispatched to Niger to investigate the intelligence reports about a putative Iraqi-Niger uranium connection, stated in an interview on NBC, that his doubts about the purported Iraq-Niger connection reached the highest levels of government, including Vice President Dick Cheney's office. In fact, he said, Cheney's office inquired about the purported Niger-Iraq link. "The question was asked of the CIA by the Office of the Vice President. The Office of the Vice President, I am absolutely convinced, received a very specific response to the question it asked, and that response was based upon my trip out there," Wilson said. What input did the Vice President's office have into your State of the Union speech? Did the Vice President's office receive one or more drafts of the speech prior to its delivery, and if so, when?
5. One week after your State of the Union address, Secretary of State Colin Powell appeared before the UN Security Council to discuss the status of inspections in Iraq and describe U.S. intelligence information regarding Iraqi possession of weapons of mass destruction. The Secretary did not cite the claim about Iraqi attempts to obtain uranium from Africa in the UN speech. This suggests that some time after your State of the Union Address, the U.S. Government decided against citing alleged Iraqi attempts to obtain

uranium from Africa in the Security Council. Yet there was no public acknowledgement by any one in a leadership position in the Administration that earlier claims about this were based on erroneous information until after Ambassador Wilson wrote an article in the New York Times laying out the facts and circumstances surrounding this matter. Why didn't you or your Administration correct the public record earlier?

6. In light of the revelations regarding this claim, what reassurance can Congress and the American public receive that the other claims you made in your State of the Union speech regarding Iraqi weapons of mass destruction programs are based on solid intelligence information and analysis? In your response, please address the following issues:

   a. During your State of the Union address you stated:

      > "Our intelligence officials estimate that Saddam Hussein had the materials to produce as much as 500 tons of sarin, mustard and VX nerve agent. In such quantities, these chemical agents could also kill untold thousands. He's not accounted for these materials. He has given no evidence that he has destroyed them."

      Where are the 500 tons of sarin, mustard, and VX nerve agent you discussed? Was the intelligence information upon which this statement was based erroneous?

   b. During your State of the Union address you stated:

      > "U.S. intelligence indicates that Saddam Hussein had upwards of 30,000 munitions capable of delivering chemical agents. Inspectors recently turned up 16 of them -- despite Iraq's recent declaration denying their existence. Saddam Hussein has not accounted for the remaining 29,984 of these prohibited munitions. He's given no evidence that he has destroyed them. "

      Where are the remaining 29,984 chemical weapons-capable munitions? Was the intelligence information upon which this statement was based also erroneous?

   c. During your State of the Union address you stated:

      > "From three Iraqi defectors we know that Iraq, in the late 1990s, had several mobile biological weapons labs. These are designed to produce germ warfare agents, and can be moved from place to a place to evade

inspectors. Saddam Hussein has not disclosed these facilities. He's given no evidence that he has destroyed them."

Where are the several mobile biological weapons labs? We are aware of press reports of the discovery of one vehicle that some within the Administration claimed to represent one such lab, but we are also aware from press reports that some within the intelligence community do not believe the evidence supports such a conclusion. In any event, the several mobile labs mentioned in your speech do not appear to have been found, nor has definitive evidence linked the one vehicle that has been found to biological weapons production. Was the intelligence information upon which this statement was based also erroneous?

Mr. President, we know that you share our concern about the potential damage that the revelations regarding the false uranium information has done and is doing to U.S. nonproliferation efforts around the world. As a direct result of concerns over manipulation or exaggeration of intelligence information regarding weapons of mass destruction, there is a danger that nations around the world may lose confidence that they can rely on the United States for straight information on the growing risk of nonproliferation. Without the credible leadership of the U.S. in combating the spread of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction, this effort becomes a dangerous muddle, rife for exploitation by proliferators.

We therefore respectfully request that you provide us with a clarification of the matters we have raised, so that we can better understand how the statement about the alleged Iraqi efforts to obtain African uranium came to be made, and receive some reassurance that the Administration's other statements regarding alleged Iraqi weapons of mass destruction programs rests on a strong evidentiary basis.

We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Patrick J. Kennedy

Edward J. Markey

Sanford D. Bishop, Jr.

Marty Meehan

Bill Pascrell, Jr.

NY9

Ellen Tauscher

Cal Dooley

Gene Taylor

Baron Hill

Robert Weyl

Marion Berry

Steven R. Rothman

Gary L. Ackerman

Shelley Berkley

Steve Israel