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Iraq Watch The Politics of War March 23, 2004

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Ms. Ginny Brown-Waite of Florida) . Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 2003, the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. Delahunt) is recognized for 60 minutes.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Madam Speaker, I applaud the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. Kirk) for spending an hour, although I do not quite agree with some of the facts that the gentleman stated.

Mr. KIRK. Madam Speaker, if the gentleman would yield, I will say that the gentleman is an absolute leader on human rights around the world, and on that we completely agree.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Madam Speaker, on that I echo the kudo.

I am joined tonight by the gentleman from Washington (Mr. Inslee). I anticipate that we will be shortly joined by two other colleagues, the gentleman from Hawaii (Mr. Abercrombie) as well as the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. Strickland), for another session that we have labeled as Iraq Watch to discuss issues concerning the Middle East with a particular focus on Iraq, Afghanistan, and the war on terror.

There is much to talk about tonight. I do not think an hour will be sufficient. I also should mention over the course of the past 8 months, and we have been doing this for approximately 8 months now, I know that the gentleman from Washington (Mr. Inslee) and the other Members involved have received a number of calls, e-mails, correspondence from not just our own constituents but from all over the country. There is one question that is constantly asked, and that is why is the House empty at this hour of the night.

I think we should explain to those viewing this evening that the legislative business of the House of Representatives has been concluded for the day and we are now into a phase that is called Special Orders. Each side of the aisle, Republicans and Democrats, are allocated an hour, actually two hours, to just have a conversation or make a presentation about issues that they have a particular interest in or issues which they feel the American people need more information on. I am sure many who watch C-SPAN note that during the course of the debate on particular proposals, the time is very limited, given the numbers of Members that wish to speak. In fact, the usual course allows for at most a maximum of some 5 minutes for each Member to speak. On those issues that have a particular interest on both sides of the aisle, what occurs is the individual Member who happens to be managing the bill, either Republican or Democrat, is responsible for allocating time and often rather than 5 minutes, the likelihood is that a Member will only have 2 or 3 minutes to explain his or her perspective on a particular issue.

So this phase is called Special Orders. Earlier there were three of our friends and colleagues from the Republican side who discussed the budget. Prior to their coming to the floor, three or four Democratic Members spoke about the budget and the perspective of Democrats as to the proposal put forth by the Republican Party, and also clearly an alternative that will be presented by the Democrats in terms of the debate on where we go as far as a Nation is concerned, because in many respects the budget does reflect our values. And as Members heard earlier from our colleagues on the Republican side, there is a growing and profound concern about the escalating deficit that has been brought about by the actions of this particular administration and this Republican majority in both the House and the Senate.

I think it is important that the American people remember that the Republican Party controls the House of Representatives, controls the United States Senate, and obviously the current incumbent in the White House is a Republican. So when we speak of deficits, this is a deficit that was engendered by the majority party in this country. I know the Democrats are extremely concerned about the deficit because the interest that is paid on the national debt detracts from other investments that could be made in a wide variety of initiatives such as infrastructure, education, health care, and a long litany of issues that I believe are a priority to the American people.

Madam Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Washington (Mr. Inslee).

Mr. INSLEE. Madam Speaker, just to follow up on the comment and the discussion of the deficit, it is not only Democrats who are concerned with the deficit; it is Republicans as well. Last night I was in a town hall meeting attended by about 150 people in Snohomish County, Washington, and I had a fellow stand up who said he was a Republican and was extremely concerned that this government, which he understood was controlled by the Republican Party lock, stock and barrel, was running up these enormous deficit. His basic question was, What is going on? He was flabbergasted to see that happening.

What I had to tell him was the news was actually worse than he had heard. He had heard the number that the Republican government had run up a \$500 billion deficit, and it bothered him. It bothered him even more when I told him the deficit was actually higher than that because the administration and the Congress to some degree have played with some funny numbers that make Enron blush how accounting is done.

One example, I had to tell him the President's budget, which has been forwarded to the Congress proposing expenditures for next year, omitted any sums for fighting the Iraq war, any sums for fighting the Afghanistan war. You can kind of understand how a government can run up giant deficits, the largest deficits in American history if they play funny games of sending up budgets when we are in the middle of a war spending \$100 billion a year in Iraq, or a little short of that, and then assess zero cost to that.

I just cannot understand, this administration must not think anybody can read in America when they try to play games like that. I can inform the White House that my Democrat and Republican constituents are very aware of this and are very concerned about it.

Let me turn, if I can, to the Iraq issue which we have now been talking about for some months.

The reason we are here is twofold: One, our proud men and women are doing a job in Iraq tonight which all Americans are proud of. Over 500 of them have paid the ultimate sacrifice to the duty to which they pledged honor to our country. Their sacrifice demands that the government of the United States tell the truth to the American people about what happened in Iraq and why this war started, based on false information.

Just to set the stage for our discussion tonight, I would like to point out at least some of that false information that ended up starting this war. I want to be very specific on this so no one can say that we have gilded the lily.

The fact is, sadly, that on March 17, 2003, the President of the United States of America went before the American people and in an address to the Nation said, and I quote, "Intelligence gathered by this and other governments leaves no doubt that the Iraq regime continues to possess and conceal some of the most lethal weapons ever devised." That statement was false and the information gathered over a year of spending over \$100 million of seeking with a fine-toothed comb in Iraq has demonstrated with some conviction that that statement was false, unfortunately.

On August 2, 2002, the Vice President of the United States, DICK CHENEY, went before the Veterans of Foreign Wars and stated, "Simply stated, there is no doubt that Saddam Hussein now has weapons of mass destruction." That statement was false, false both on the issue of the presence of weapons of mass destruction as indicated by Mr. David Kay, who was the person hired by this country to find out, but also false in saying there was no doubt, because a review by this Chamber, by the three of us and others, has

showed there was plenty of doubt about this issue in Iraq that was covered up, was suppressed by this administration.

Mr. DELAHUNT. I think it is important to remember that when the Director of the CIA testified recently before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, he acknowledged that on several occasions he privately spoke to both the President and on multiple occasions spoke to the Vice President about errors that they had made in terms of misstatements, let us use that term for the moment, misstatements, yet we have heard nothing specifically from the Vice President. And the gentleman alluded to the incident earlier, being forthright with the American people that subsequently he received information from George Tenet in private that corrected a public statement that he had made, and yet he does not acknowledge that today publicly.

Mr. INSLEE. Let me, if I can, say why that is a problem. We need the administration to fulfill its obligation to the American people to help get to the bottom of what happened in this situation. The fact is, I will indicate in just a moment, every single chance we have had to peel back the onion and peel back the draperies to find out what happened, this administration has continued to suppress information.

I want to give the gentleman this one example. On January 28, 2003, the President went before the Nation in the State of the Union address, stood right behind where the gentleman is standing right now and said, ``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."`

That statement was false. The reason we know that is that the person sent by the administration to Africa to find out whether it was true or not, Ambassador Joe Wilson, who, at the request of the administration, went to Africa and reported back before the State of the Union address that that was a bunch of hokum, it was a bunch of malarkey, and it was false.

And the President, in the State of the Union, despite that specific response from our intelligence service, if you will, or someone acting in their behalf, put it in the State of the Union anyway, or someone on his behalf.

Everybody can make mistakes. We are all human. But let us see what this administration's response to this falsehood and disclosure of falsehood was. Was it a thank you to Mr. Wilson for helping us get to the bottom of this? Was it a further inquiry to find out who was responsible for putting this gross misstatement in the State of the Union address? No.

What did they do? They tried to punish Joe Wilson, the citizen who did his patriotic duty to disclose this misstatement, by outing his wife who worked for the CIA, attempting to destroy her CIA career, to send a message to the world and to America,

``Don't tell the truth about this administration because we'll attempt to destroy you." That is what they have attempted to do.

Thank goodness there is a grand jury investigating what could be a Federal crime here, because this is a pattern with this administration. Look what is happening tonight.

Mr. ABERCROMBIE. If the gentleman will yield, the gentleman makes reference to the question of a grand jury. I believe that if one takes an oath to speak before a committee of the Congress or one that is authorized by the Congress and the executive, that one is subject to perjury. I believe that is the case.

I would have to defer to the gentleman from Massachusetts, I suppose, on the question of prosecution of that, but we have a commission now, the so-called 9/11 Commission, which is now meeting, and there have been severe criticisms that amount to open accusations that Mr. Richard Clarke, referred to in various ways by different officials in the administration as someone who apparently, if one is to believe the designations attached to him by members of the administration, is lying. Not distorting, not misinterpreting, not misunderstanding, not having a different point of view, not engaged in an academic exercise of confrontation and different contending visions of what might have taken place, but on the contrary, specifically that Mr. Clarke is lying, that he is not telling the truth.

I believe Mr. Clarke is going to testify to the Commission tomorrow. I am not familiar with whether or not the witnesses taking the stand there in front of that Commission are under oath. But given the seriousness of the circumstances, I certainly hope that they are.

Mr. DELAHUNT. I think that we should remind the audience that the gentleman from Hawaii has just joined us. In terms of what Mr. Clarke testifies to tomorrow, I think we should suspend our judgment tonight.

Mr. ABERCROMBIE. If the gentleman will yield on that point, I have no difficulty with that. My point here was in response to the gentleman from Washington's observation that there is at least one grand jury meeting right now.

Mr. DELAHUNT. One grand jury that we are aware of.

Mr. ABERCROMBIE. That is what I say, at least one meeting now. Perhaps there may be more. My point is that there are so many accusations with respect to why, how, when, should we, et cetera, having to do with Iraq that you simply cannot continue to assassinate the personalities or the characters of the various individuals that we have been citing and at some point not say, look, somebody's either telling the truth or not, and let's put it to the test.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Does this come as a surprise to the gentleman?

Let us be honest among ourselves and with those people that are viewing. If the gentleman remembers, it was the Bush-Cheney campaign that back in 2000 during the primary season, there was an ad that ran in New York. It was a 60-second radio spot in the days before the primary which was March 7 of 2000.

Let me just give the gentleman a condensed version of that ad:

Hello. My name is Geri Barish and I am a breast cancer survivor. It is a woman introducing herself to the listening audience. Like many, I had thought of supporting JOHN MCCAIN in next week's presidential primary. So I looked into his record.

What I discovered was shocking. JOHN MCCAIN opposes many projects dedicated to women's health issues.

It's true. MCCAIN opposes funding for vital breast cancer programs right here in New York. JOHN MCCAIN calls these projects just ``garden variety pork." That's shocking.

The truth, of course, was that Senator McCain did not vote against this bill because of the breast cancer projects, but because it was a military spending bill that did not provide adequate increases, in his judgment, for our troops.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Ms. Ginny Brown-Waite of Florida) . The gentleman is reminded to please not make references to individual Senators.

Mr. DELAHUNT. I apologize to the Chair.

Mr. ABERCROMBIE. Madam Speaker, point of inquiry to the Chair. So that we can be sure that we do not violate any of the rules, I believe the gentleman was not making specific reference. He was referring to an article by way of reference. He was not referring directly. He was reporting something else.

Mr. DELAHUNT. I will eliminate reference.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. For clarification, the gentleman is not allowed to quote material that makes references to an individual Senator that would be out of order if spoken in his own words.

Mr. DELAHUNT. I thank the Chair. What I want to explain is that in this particular case, the attack on Senator McCain failed to mention that his sister was a breast cancer survivor.

Mr. ABERCROMBIE. If the gentleman will yield, because I do not want to incur the ire of the Chair, I think what we need to do here, and perhaps the Chair can enlighten us if we are in violation, if we would refer to a Senator unnamed who happened to be

running for President at a particular time, people can make their own reference. Is that allowed?

Mr. DELAHUNT. From the State of Arizona, I would add.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Parliamentarian indicates that the gentleman should refrain from making references to individual Senators.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Again, I thank the Chair.

Mr. ABERCROMBIE. We do not want to violate anything. We would not refer to a particular Senator, but at least one Senator ran for President in the last election. Can we do that? Can we at least refer to the fact that there was a Senator who ran in the last election?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. General references may be made without referencing an individual Senator.

Mr. ABERCROMBIE. I thank the Chair. I appreciate the Chair taking the time to make that clear.

Mr. DELAHUNT. If I can, what I am going to do is what is rather boldly stated here on the cover of Time magazine in February, when the question is posed, and I would suggest that the question is now being posed in very real terms as we witness the string of revelations that are occurring now on an everyday basis: Believe Him Or Not: Does Bush Have a Credibility Gap?

This is about credibility. It is not just about the President, because the President speaks for the United States. The President's credibility becomes our credibility. Not Republican credibility, not Democratic credibility, but the credibility of the United States in a very dangerous moment in world history, when we are all united to defeat terrorism.

There was a fascinating story in my hometown paper, the Boston Globe, this morning. I think it is worthy to present it to the gentleman tonight and to have the viewing audience listen.

The former chief U.S. weapons inspector in Iraq warned yesterday that the United States is in grave danger of destroying its credibility at home and abroad if it does not own up to our mistakes in Iraq.

That is David Kay. That is the individual who universally has received praise and respect from policymakers and people involved in this particular issue. He was appointed by this White House, this administration, to lead a team to go to Iraq and determine whether there were weapons of mass destruction. It is he now that is imploring this White House, this President, this Vice President, to use his words, to "come clean with the American people" because, as he points out, the cost of our mistakes with regard to the

explanation of why we went to war in Iraq are far greater than Iraq itself. This issue is so profound that it is now the credibility of the United States, the prestige that we have earned through decades, through the centuries, that is at risk.

“We are in grave danger of having destroyed our credibility internationally and domestically with regard to warning about future events. The answer is to admit you were wrong, and what I find most disturbing about Washington is the belief you can never admit you are wrong.”

It is like I indicated earlier, there have been newspaper reports that the director of the CIA, Mr. Tenet, privately corrected the Vice President on his statements linking Saddam Hussein to al Qaeda. And yet the Vice President has not had the decency to come forward to the American people and say, I was wrong, when I was wrong.

And in another interview Mr. Kay goes on, and when asked what his opinion was of the statement of Vice President CHENEY that weapons of mass destruction might still be found in Iraq, his response was, “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.” That is what this 9/11 commission is hearing this week. The message that we send out to the rest of the world is that we are strong and a mature democracy if we tell the truth, and we will not have a credibility gap.

I believe we have enough evidence now to say that the intelligence process and the policy process obviously crafted by the President, President Bush, and Vice President Cheney that used that information did not work at the level of effectiveness that we require in the age we live in. I mean, this is absolutely the most profound issue, in my judgment, that is currently confronting the United States with long-term implications.

Mr. ABERCROMBIE. Madam Speaker, will the gentleman yield on that point?

Mr. DELAHUNT. I yield to the gentleman from Hawaii.

Mr. ABERCROMBIE. Madam Speaker, it is quite clear that Mr. Kay is clearly taking the high road in terms of his characterization of what took place and is giving the broadest benefit of a doubt with respect to whether there were misinterpretations or misunderstandings as to what the true facts were and what the implications of those facts were in terms of whether we went into Iraq or not.

Others have a different interpretation. I quite agree with the gentleman that this is the most profound issue that we have faced perhaps in our lifetime because we have to go all the way back to the Nixon Administration to find a situation in which there was a deliberate misleading of the American people as to what the facts were with a given situation, in this instance the general question of Watergate, everything that that implied and involved. But at least there what was being done was a cover-up, essentially, of rather sordid and almost banal and mundane political machinations. The rather sad spectacle of the President of the United States engaged in third-rate theatrics, burglaries,

false presentations as to where money came from and where it went and so on, sordid and stupid and tawdry.

But in this instance, I would posit for my friend and for those who are listening, in this instance we have accusations made that there was a deliberate undertaking geared towards moving this Nation to war, a preemptive war, based on information and perspectives presented to the American public which were untrue, were known to be untrue, and were in fact the ideological leanings of a small group of people determined to take this Nation into war with Iraq regardless of whether it served either the strategic interests of this Nation or whether it satisfied anybody's definition by any measure of the truth.

Mr. INSLEE. Madam Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. DELAHUNT. I yield to the gentleman from Washington.

Mr. INSLEE. Madam Speaker, I think the proper characterization, I heard one of our colleagues at a town meeting say to one of our colleagues never in this country have so many been misled by so few, and now we are going to find the truth as to why that happened. And the reason we are going to find the truth are two principles: principle number one, facts are stubborn things; and, two, the truth comes out. It is coming out now, and it has come out yesterday on television, and it is coming out tomorrow in the commission.

I want to read some of this truth that I believe we are going to hear. The question is whether or not this administration was compelled by intelligence reports of weapons of mass destruction that forced them to action in Iraq or whether this administration had a preconceived judgment and decision to go after Iraq and then went looking for something to substantiate that preconceived decision to the American public. And it is the latter, and we know it is the latter, because every day more and more truth is leaking out of this White House.

What did we hear last night? We heard in a book by Mr. Richard Clarke, who was the White House's former counterterrorism chief, a pretty high individual in the White House who is responsible for counterterrorism, which was quoted in the New York Times, where he said that Mr. Bush pressed him, Mr. Clarke, three times to find evidence that Iraq was behind the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. The accusation is explosive because no such link has ever been proved. Mr. Clarke says, quoting the President, ``I want you, as soon

as you can, to go back over everything, everything,' " Mr. Clarke writes, and Mr. Bush told him ``See if Saddam did this. See if he's linked in any way.' " When Mr. Clarke protested that the culprit was al Qaeda, not Iraq, Mr. Bush ``testily ordered" him, he writes, to ``look into Iraq's Saddam,' " and then left the room; then demanded a report, which was prepared, which came back and gave the same answer that there was not a

meaningful connection between al Qaeda and Iraq, sent the report up the chain from CIA and FBI. It got bounced back and sent back saying, `` `wrong answer, do it again.' "

A war was started on a false premise of a connection between Iraq and al Qaeda, and the truth as to why that happened is coming out. Basically, as far as I can tell, the White House's principle is that their Secretary of the Treasury, who essentially said pretty much the same thing, that it had been Iraq, Iraq, Iraq even before September 11. Their counterterrorism chief, Richard Clarke, who said on the day of the attack they said let us go get Iraq and try to gin up some evidence to support this, in a manner of speaking; Joe Wilson, who was sent by this administration to find out whether this is a bill of goods about this uranium that got into the State of the Union address, the White House is saying that all these people who worked for the White House in these high positions have no clue as to what was going on. As far as I can tell, what the White House says is their position is nobody who ever worked in the White House has a clue as to what went on there because whatever they said has got to be wrong. And now, instead of welcoming a critical analysis as to what went wrong here and where the foul-up is, what is this administration doing?

According to the New York Times, the way they characterize it, and I think it is fair, they have ``opened an aggressive personal attack against its former counterterrorism chief, Richard Clarke." What did they do to Joe Wilson, the ambassador who found out that they told a falsehood in the State of the Union address? They tried to destroy his wife's career. What did they do to their former Secretary of the Treasury, who said essentially that they had been trying to go after Iraq from day one in the administration? And I paraphrase a little bit, but generally that was the thrust. They attacked him personally.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Madam Speaker, but these are all actions that are directed at individuals. And I abhor them, and somebody should be held responsible. It is as if there is another enemies list.

The gentleman alluded earlier to the Nixon years. There is something Nixonian about targeting individuals, attacking them, attacking them at a personal level, and clearly trying to undermine their professionalism and hurt their careers. We have seen it again and again.

I began earlier with the radio spot that was used during the course of the Presidential election, the one that was masterminded obviously by Karl Rove, who is the political adviser and I am sure consults with the President on a regular basis. But the gentleman talked about former Secretary O'Neill. Mr. Clarke now. What happened to General Shinseki when he suggested that there was need for 2 to 300,000 troops if the peace was to be won in Iraq? He was castigated in an extremely dismissive way by Under Secretary Paul Wolfowitz.

Mr. ABERCROMBIE. Madam Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. DELAHUNT. I yield to the gentleman from Hawaii.

Mr. ABERCROMBIE. Madam Speaker, he was publicly rebuked, the chief of staff of the Army who had come up, I will tell the Members, from the ranks. I happen to know about General Shinseki because he is a true son of Hawaii. The son of humble people whose family was interned in World War II for the crime of being Japanese Americans, who served our country from the ranks on up to becoming chief of staff of the Army, was rebuked by this little man.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Madam Speaker, again as I indicated, I sympathize with these individuals, and I am confident that as time moves on, because America is truly about, at its essence, the search for the truth, that they will be vindicated. What I would submit is that time is vindicating them now, whether it be Mr. Clarke or whether it be David Kay.

Mr. ABERCROMBIE. Hans Blix.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Hans Blix. They are all being vindicated. But really what is at stake here is the prestige and the credibility of the United States.

We heard a lot in the debate last week about appeasement. There is no appeasement when it comes to terrorism. We are all united, Republican, Democrat. I cannot imagine one Member of this House not being adamant that we pursue justice and that we win the war on terror. But if we continue to have our credibility undermined by this White House, we risk losing the war on terror.

Mr. INSLEE. Madam Speaker, if the gentleman would yield, frankly, again, I want to reiterate we are all human and we have all made mistakes and every administration has made mistakes in the past, and we ought to be somewhat understanding of that. But this administration has been an abject failure in helping us find out what happened here and finding responsibility for those and taking action to hold them accountable so we can demonstrate to the world and to the American people that we are not going to countenance starting wars based on falsehood.

Let us look at the record of this administration in that regard.

How many people have been held to account for the fact that a war started based on false information? How many people? The answer? Zero. Zero. Five hundred people have lost their lives in Iraq, but zero people has George Bush held accountable for this false information, and it is wrong. Only one person in America has lost their job over this false information, and that was a radio talk show host.

We need accountability for this mistake, and this administration needs to get busy, instead of stonewalling and covering up the truth, to help us find the truth and find who is accountable.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Let us hope that they listened to David Kay, who is imploring them to come clean with the American people. It is so important, because, well, let us look at the most recent example.

If we are serious about the war on terrorism, we need to have the respect and cooperation and commitment of the entire world. If you remember, in the aftermath of September 11 there was information that came pouring into the United States about al Qaeda cells in some 60 different countries. In fact, we heard there were dozens of al Qaeda cells operating right here in the United States.

What is happening now? The most recent statement by one of those nations that actually participated and has a number of troops in Iraq today, and I refer to the Polish nation, their President said, "We were misled. They took us for a ride." That is his quote.

The Spaniards, we are castigated by our friends for appeasement. I thought that was rather arrogant, considering the fact that the Spanish have dealt for years attempting to rid their nation of the terrorists who claim to be seeking independence, the so-called ETA.

I found very interesting in the aftermath of the election in Spain that the new leader there declared that his most immediate priority will be to fight terrorism. There was a disagreement that Iraq was a distraction, that we went after the wrong enemy. And more and more people are coming to that belief.

The South Koreans just this past week indicated that they did not want their troops transported to a venue that would most likely create a potential where they would be engaged in violence.

The problem is, this is not about appeasement; this is about credibility in winning the war on terror.

Mr. INSLEE. If the gentleman will yield, the question you are asking is what Americans are asking all over the country. Yesterday, one of my constituents asked, I thought, a very interesting question. He said, after September 11, who did the President focus on? According to Paul O'Neill, the Secretary of the Treasury, including the President's own counterterrorism chief, Richard Clark, the answer was Iraq.

What my constituent asked me then, he said, well, you know, 15 out of the 19 hijackers were from Saudi Arabia. Did the President ever ask about Saudi Arabia, the country where historically a lot of these companies he has had dealings with in the oil and gas industry are? No. He never asked about Saudi Arabia. Iraq, Iraq.

I wanted to read what the counterterrorism chief says happened, because it is important, in trying to find out whether they focused on Iraq without justification.

Mr. Richard Clark said, "Mr. Rumsfeld was saying we needed to bomb Iraq, and we all said no, no, al Qaeda is in Afghanistan; we need to bomb Afghanistan. And Mr.

Rumsfeld said, there aren't any good targets in Afghanistan, and there are lots of good targets in Iraq. I said, well, there are a lot of good targets in a lot of places, but Iraq has nothing to do with it."

This is the counterterrorism chief of the White House. He went on: "Initially, I thought when he said there aren't enough targets in Afghanistan, I thought he was joking. Initially, I think that they wanted to believe that there was a connection, but the CIA was sitting there, the FBI was sitting there, I was sitting there, saying we have looked at this issue for years; for years we have looked, and there is just no connection."

This is the White House's counterterrorism chief telling the Secretary of Defense there is no connection between Iraq and al Qaeda.

And what did the President tell the American people over and over and over? He said essentially you cannot even think of them as distinct entities. He wanted to create a fear, to create an image in America that al Qaeda and Osama bin Laden had been morphed into Saddam Hussein, because he believed it was in the Nation's best interest, for whatever the reasons are.

But he did not have the right to tell these falsehoods to the American people. Now that the truth is coming up, he owes us an obligation to hold accountable in his administration whoever is responsible for this, and he owes us the obligation to stop stonewalling the distribution of truth to the American people, and he needs to come clean, as his arms inspector, David Kay, says he should do. This is an obligation to the people who are serving in Iraq tonight, our brothers and sons and daughters and husbands and wives.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Do you find it interesting that in the United Kingdom, and I disagreed with the Prime Minister there, Tony Blair. As you know, I voted against the resolution authorizing military action against Iraq. But I respect Tony Blair. He went before the Parliament, and for hour after hour after hour stood his ground in a respectful fashion and answered each question that was posed to him.

There is a commission going on right now. I would hope that the President would reconsider and go before that commission, not behind closed doors, but for the American people to hear, so that the credibility not just of President Bush and Vice President Cheney, but the credibility of the United States can be restored and replicate exactly what the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom did in response to questions about the British role in Iraq.

Mr. ABERCROMBIE. If the gentleman will yield, the gentleman might be interested in the view of former

President Carter in that regard.

In an interview today in the Independent, the British newspaper, the Independent reports that President Carter "strongly criticized" Mr. Bush and British Prime Minister

Tony Blair ``for waging an unnecessary war to oust Saddam Hussein, based on lies and misinterpretations."

This is not me speaking; this is former President Carter. This is not a reporter giving an editorial point of view. This is former President Carter.

I will repeat: ``for waging an unnecessary war to oust Saddam Hussein, based on lies and misinterpretations. There was no reason for us to become involved in Iraq recently. That was a war based on lies and misinterpretations from London and from Washington claiming falsely that Saddam Hussein was responsible for the 9-11 attacks, claiming falsely that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction. And I think that President Bush and Prime Minister Blair probably knew that many of the allegations were based on uncertain intelligence. A decision was made to go to war. Then people said, let's find a reason to do it."

Mr. DELAHUNT. Well, you know, again if I can take the time for just a moment, what I would propose, because I understand that the 9/11 commission that is currently sitting here today has agreed to, and I think mistakenly, has agreed to a 1-hour interview with President Bush, and only two members of the commission are going to be entitled to inquire of him. That just simply continues to raise questions. It will be interpreted as a lack of being forthcoming.

What is necessary now, more than ever, as David Kay has said, let us open up. We are a democracy. I would go so far as a Democrat to suggest that the former President, President Clinton, and President Bush, go before that commission, one after another, sequentially, and stay there as long as there are questions to be asked regarding terrorism and the threat of terrorism to the United States. I would issue a challenge to both of them. Make it a bipartisan challenge. We have to take this out of the political realm.

Yes, I am not naive; I know there is a Presidential election, and these are issues that should be discussed in a Presidential election. But they have to be vetted in a forum such as a commission, where all of the answers are put out. And if there are mistakes that have been made, both during the Clinton administration and in this administration, the American people will be better off, and, more importantly, America's role in the world will once again be respected.

One only has to look at the polls. There was a recent study done, and I am not going to take the time, but let me just give you a quick example, and then one of you gentleman can close.

This is rating George Bush, but substitute George Bush for America. In Britain, our closest ally, the favorability of George Bush is 39 percent; the unfavorably is 57 percent. In France, the favorability is 15; 85 unfavorable. Fourteen percent favorable in Germany; 85 unfavorable. In Russia, 28 favorable; 60 unfavorable. In Turkey, 21 percent favorable; 67 percent unfavorable. Pakistan, 7 percent favorable; 67 percent unfavorable. In Jordan, 3 percent favorable; and 96 percent unfavorable.

This is true all over the world, not just in the Mideast, but Asia, all over Latin America. It is about the United States. We need allies. We are finding that out. We need cooperation. We have got to win the war on terror. We cannot tolerate appeasement, but we should not be doing it alone.

Mr. INSLEE. If the gentleman will yield, the obligation that I think is paramount, forgetting for the moment the need for allies, but the real paramount obligation is to the families who have lost loved ones in Iraq.

Now, the family I think of is one that I spent some time with last weekend who lost their husband and son in the Tigris River, a U.S. soldier awarded the Bronze Star for his heroism and service in Iraq. That family is owed an explanation by its government as to why their husband and son died in a conflict that was started based on false information from the Government of the United States, and that ought to be a bipartisan position that that obligation is owed.

Amongst questions that need to be answered are these: Why did the President of the United States of America and his administration 10 times on nine separate public appearances tell the American people that Saddam Hussein and Iraq had obtained aluminum tubes for use in a reconstituted nuclear program, when its own Department of Energy had told it that that was false before they made those statements?

How can they possibly now stonewall this information when we have already peeled back the onion to find out that the Department of Energy had told the White House that they were wrong about this claim and they still used it to start this war? That is a question this family is owed an answer to.

Second, why did this administration tell Americans that Iraq had developed these robot drone aircraft for the purpose of spraying chemical and biological weapons on us here in the continental United States when its own Air Force in analyzing the information had concluded that these robots were used for photography, not aerial spraying of biological and chemical weapons?

Why did the President of the United States authorize doing that, and if he did not do it, who did? Who did that? Because those people need to be held accountable, if necessary, with their jobs at least. This administration has done nothing of the sort.

Mr. ABERCROMBIE. Madam Speaker, if the gentleman will yield on that point, there is a lesson for all of us, and I think we have all said tonight, and if I have not said it yet, I will certainly reiterate the gentleman's point that we all make mistakes, we all have our weaknesses, we all have our elements of shortsightedness. But I will tell my colleagues this: as much as I opposed this attack on Baghdad and, as I termed it at the time that a war would break out after we made this dash to Baghdad which is, in fact, what happened, as much as I opposed that, we bear responsibility too. And I want to indicate to people that we are down on this floor not just because we need to hear ourselves talk; we

are down on this floor because this Congress needs to be accountable too. The very questions that the gentleman from Washington (Mr. Inslee) has been asking, this Congress should have been asking. We should not have allowed ourselves to be pushed into doing the most profound and fundamental thing that any Congress can do and that any President can do, which is take us into war. This should be a lesson to all of us, including and perhaps starting with the Congress.

The Constitution says only the Congress can declare war. When did it happen that we turned it over to the President to make his or her own decision on that issue? We have a responsibility, too; and I want to indicate to everybody, at least for this Member, and I think I am probably speaking for the other Members on the floor here, we intend to come back here, not because we are doing penance, but because we are doing oversight, the oversight that we should have done before. Maybe the same conclusion would have been arrived at, I do not know, I doubt it; but we should have been doing these things.

No commission should be looking into this right now. The plain fact is we should be looking into it, and that is what this Iraq Watch is going to do. We may not have the benefit of having the President in front of us or Mr. Cheney or others, but we have the benefit of understanding what the revelations have been and what their meanings are and to search for the truth, and that is our obligation. And I hope that if nothing else comes out of all of this, that in future the Congress will take seriously its obligation and carry forward on the understanding that only the Congress can declare war; and it should be only done over the most thorough and complete examination as to what has taken place and what the strategic and moral interests of the United States are.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Madam Speaker, I am reminded of the words of Brent Scowcroft and others in the first Bush administration, those that served under President George Herbert Walker Bush, but particularly what Brent Scowcroft stated in a column that he wrote. He expressed a fear that a unilateral rush into a preemptive war would undercut worldwide support for the war on terror and cast America as an aggressor Nation for the first time in our history. Now, here is a gentleman, a lifelong Republican, presumably, a man well respected internationally, has an excellent reputation here in Washington as a serious person, a man of unimpeachable integrity. And I think we have all been saying in our own different ways what he said so eloquently. And sadly, we find ourselves in that very, very tragic moment where we are losing allies, we are losing the respect of the international community; friends are beginning to turn their backs on us. And, if that occurs, the war that we must win, the war on terror, is very much at risk.