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Iraq Watch The Cost of the War March 9, 2004

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. Bonner). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 2003, the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. Delahunt) is recognized for one-half of the time remaining before midnight, which is approximately 34 minutes.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Mr. Speaker, my friend, the gentleman from Hawaii (Mr. Abercrombie), is present here with me tonight; and we anticipate that we will be joined by several of our colleagues to continue our weekly hour where we discuss events in the Mid East, with a particular focus on Iraq and Afghanistan and, hopefully, reveal to the viewing audience some information that they may be unaware of. Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Hawaii (Mr. Abercrombie).

Mr. ABERCROMBIE. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Massachusetts. Again, Mr. Speaker, as the gentleman indicated, this is Iraq Watch. Several Members, some of whom voted for the resolution with respect to the attack in Iraq and some who did not, have been participating. The reason being that we find ourselves in a situation today where we are arguing about such things as budget, arguments taking place right now, both in the Republican Conference and in the Democratic Caucus. We find ourselves coming up on what might be termed the anniversary of the Iraq invasion. It is the anniversary. The question is before us as to what has been accomplished, what was involved; and I think, Mr. Speaker, I want to set a perspective before my colleagues and hopefully those in the American public who are viewing this evening.

There has been an increase, both in terms of discussion and in terms of reporting about activity on the Pakistan-Afghani border. There is speculation in the press, speculation in our communities across this country as to the whereabouts of Osama bin Laden and his cohorts; a flurry of reporting taking place that there is increased activity, sensors being placed, special forces being brought together, strike forces, including Pakistani troops,

American troops, CIA operatives. The question becomes this, Mr. Speaker: Why now? Why has this not been going on since September 11, 2001? Why is it taking place 6, 8 months before an election? Where is the justification for what took place in Iraq as a diversion from going forward on the Afghan-Pakistan border to capture or eliminate Osama bin Laden and his cohorts? What is the justification as we come up on the year anniversary of the invasion of Iraq of not bringing hostilities to a conclusion in Afghanistan and Pakistan with respect to the attack that was made on the United States?

There is a cover here that the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. Delahunt) has to his immediate right from Time Magazine, with a picture of Mr. Bush facing himself, a mirror image, if you will, that says, believe it or not, Does Bush have a credibility gap? I cite that not because I am interested in what Time Magazine has to say by way of cute phrasing or what they consider to be a provocative title or visual, but, rather, that the question is one that needs to be answered as we approach this anniversary of the attack on Iraq. Why are we involved now in expedited activity and an expedited increase in intense activity on the Afghan-Pakistan border to capture or eliminate Osama bin Laden? What have we been doing for the past 2 years?

Well, I can tell my colleagues what we were doing. We were diverting our attention from those who attacked us on September 11 and instead preparing ourselves and ultimately carrying through an attack on Iraq, which has turned into a disaster, an unmitigated disaster for this country. We have not captured Osama bin Laden, we have not stopped or eliminated the Taliban threat in Afghanistan, we have not come to a conclusion with respect to the stability of Pakistan, and we have created a situation in Iraq which is headed for political, economic, and social disaster.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for his comments. I would concur with the gentleman's analysis. He is absolutely correct. We secured a military victory in Afghanistan against those, the Taliban, that allowed, on their territory, in Afghanistan, the training and a safe haven for the real enemy of the United States, the al Qaeda terrorist network. It has been more than 2 years, more than 2 years since we secured that victory. And as the gentleman mentioned, we were distracted, if you will. We were distracted by an ideological conclusion that the defeat of Saddam Hussein would create a new democracy in the Middle East.

Would that it be so. But as my colleague has mentioned, not only has Osama bin Laden not been captured, and I have a sense he will be captured, and the sooner the better, and if he is not captured, may he be killed because he is the enemy of the United States, I think it is important, however, given the distraction, if you will, based on a rationale that was put forth by this President, President Bush, that Saddam Hussein not only was in the possession and had a stockpile of weapons of mass destruction, and it was suggested, if you remember, that the threat of Saddam Hussein's possession of a nuclear weapon was very real, was very real, according to what the administration was saying, in that Saddam Hussein somehow had this murky relationship with these terrorists who had designs directly on the United States, that this information has turned out to be utterly without substance.

Mr. ABERCROMBIE. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman would yield on that point, quoting from Reuter's Monday, yesterday, story about Jeremy Lovell, quote, ``George W. Bush and Tony Blair probably knew that they were exaggerating the threat from Iraq when they were making the case for war, according to former chief U.N. weapons inspector Hans Blix. The U.S. President and the British Prime Minister ignored the few caveats and reports from intelligence services on Iraq's nuclear, chemical or biological weapon programs."

He writes in his account of the months leading up to the U.S. invasion. Blix says it was ``Probable that the governments were conscious that they were exaggerating the risks they saw in order to get the political support they would not otherwise have had."

Mr. DELAHUNT. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman would yield for a moment. We have heard much relative to criticism of the intelligence services of the United States. But when one examines the reporting by the CIA, by the Defense Intelligence Agency, by the appropriate agencies within the Department of State and the Department of Defense, their reporting was characterized by conditionality, by caveats, by suggestions that there was more to it than simply a conclusion. It was described in terms of likelihood, probability, maybe, what have you. But it was presented to the American people and to the people of the world in clear stock terms that would only, only provide an inescapable conclusion that Saddam Hussein had possession of weapons of mass destruction.

You read from a report this week about the analysis by Hans Blix. Well, as my colleague is well aware, the President himself asked an individual by the name of David Kay, who many Americans have seen on a variety of news programs, to lead the post-war effort to find the so-called weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. He was the individual who had the courage to come before the Senate and say unequivocally and clearly we were all wrong.

We have not heard that yet from the President of the United States.

Well, it just happens that David Kay has now been interviewed by a highly respected journal, newspaper, called The Guardian from the United Kingdom. He has called on the Bush administration, and I am reading from a story that appeared in the March 3 edition of The Guardian, he called on the Bush administration to come clean. And these are his words here, not mine, not my colleague's, not anybody from the Republican side of the office, but David Kay's. And they have not received the attention, I dare say, they deserve here in the American media. But it was David Kay in this interview that said, ``It is time to come clean with the American people, Mr. President, and admit it was wrong about the existence of the weapons." That is David Kay.

Mr. ABERCROMBIE. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman would yield, following on that point, quoting Mr. Kay, and, again, quoting Mr. Hans Blix, who was the head of the International Atomic Energy Agency from 1981 until 1997 and later the chief of the United Nations Monitoring Verification and Inspection Commission until 2003, a person

without peer, someone who has the background and the professional experience second to none in this area, I quote him: "I am not suggesting that Blair and Bush spoke in bad faith, but I am suggesting that it would not have taken much critical thinking on their own part or on the part of their close advisors to prevent statements that misled the public. It is understood and accepted that governments must simplify complex international matters in explaining them to the public in democratic states. However, they are not vendors of merchandise but leaders of whom some sincerity should be asked when they exercise their responsibility for war or peace in the world."

Mr. DELAHUNT. Well, let me continue with the same report that I had alluded to earlier in The Guardian. And, again, this is Mr. Kay. I would hope that some of the news organizations in this country would contact Mr. Kay and corroborate this report from this highly regarded newspaper in the United Kingdom, because I think it is extremely telling. This administration will not admit they were wrong. We are going to find out what happened whether they intentionally misled or whether the intelligence itself was faulty. That is a question that will be answered during the course of the next 5 or 6 months. But it is about time for the President of the United States to stand up and say we were wrong to the American people.

Mr. Kay said, "The administration's reluctance to make that admission was further undermining its credibility at home and abroad." President Bush, Vice President Cheney, Secretary Rumsfeld and Secretary Powell owe an obligation to the American people in our role in the world and our claim to moral authority to get this matter disposed of.

The Secretary of Defense will not let it go. Donald Rumsfeld has dismissed Mr. Kay's assertion that there were no weapons of mass destruction at the start of the Iraq war as a theory that was possible but not likely. What is wrong, Mr. Rumsfeld? Do you not get it? It is better for the country. Put aside the fear of embarrassment.

This is more about--this is less about personal embarrassment than it is restoring American credibility as we proceed during the course of this year and years here after dealing in a very, very dangerous world.

Mr. Speaker, with that I yield to the gentleman from Hawaii (Mr. Abercrombie).

Mr. ABERCROMBIE. Mr. Speaker, I wish that I had a bit more faith in the idea that there would be a positive response to the questions the gentleman is posing and the observations that he is making.

The difficulty is we operate in a parallel universe. The Secretary of Defense is going to filter everything through the medium of his own perceptions, his own self-delusions. We are not going to see this. This is going to have to be resolved in the political world in the United States.

Let me offer this example of the parallel universe that I am speaking of. In the March 15 Time magazine, an interview has been conducted with the administrator, Mr. Paul

Bremer. Asked, to "whom exactly are you handing over sovereignty" in Iraq? Bremer said, "The spaces are not filled in. We will hand over to a sovereign Iraq government on June 30. The shape and structure of that government is not yet defined. When we get finished with the transitional administrative law, we will turn to a broad dialogue with Iraqi politicians, provincial governors, local councils, ministers, a variety of people to try to figure out the best and most effective way to bring in the government. We do not know what that is yet."

I submit that is such a startling statement of complete incapacity to understand what it is that is taking place. That is why I say we are living in a parallel universe. How is it possible for the American people to have any confidence when they are sending men and women of the armed services to Iraq, putting them in harm's way as a result of policies of this administration? How is it possible for us to expect anything else but the killing and grievous wounding of those military personnel in such an atmosphere, in which the administrator on behalf of the government of the United States is saying, "When we get finished with the transitional administrative law, we will turn to a broad dialogue, a variety of people, to try to figure out the best and most effective way to bring in the government. We do not know who that is yet."

The gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. Delahunt) was not at hearings in the Committee on Armed Services that I attended. I asked the same question within recent weeks, Exactly what is it that we are doing? Who are we turning this government over to? What is the authority? And what is the obligation that we have and our troops have? What authority does this governing entity that we are turning over to have? What authority does it have? What obligations does it have? Do we have a status of forces agreement? And with whom do we have a status of forces agreement? And whom will enforce the status of forces agreement?

We are coming up on June 30, and yet the press having asked these questions, at least Time magazine having asked the question, prints it as if that answer was good and sufficient unto the question. We are about to engage in a situation in which we are going to have a farce take place of a presumed turning over of authority with a president, will he stand up, I do not know if he will get on a carrier, but will he stand up somewhere on a field in Iraq and say, Mission accomplished too, because this government has now come into being?

I know what a government is. I think I know what the obligations and responsibilities of a government are, but I have yet to have a straightforward, clear-cut answer as to what the relationship of the United States military, let alone the United States Government, is going to have with this new governing entity on June 30.

Mr. DELAHUNT. We have been joined by our colleagues, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. Strickland) and the gentleman from the State of Washington (Mr. Inslee), regulars on the Tuesday night Iraq Watch.

I yield to the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. Strickland); but before I give the time to him, I just want to repeat what David Kay said, the individual that was put in charge of searching for the weapons of mass destruction by this President, and this is from a report from a British newspaper last week. Mr. Kay said that "continuing evasion," these are his words, "would create public cynicism about the administration's motives." He also said, "If the administration did not confront the Iraqi intelligence fiasco head on, it would undermine its credibility with allies in future crises for a generation." For a generation.

This President with his failure to come clean with the American people, to be forthright, is putting our credibility at risk for a generation. It is time for President Bush to stand up and say the truth and to concur with the statement by David Kay that we were all wrong. You were wrong. Your Secretary of Defense was wrong. Your Vice President has been wrong. Your Under Secretary of Defense, Mr. Wolfowitz, has been wrong. You have been wrong. Then we can proceed again to restore the confidence of the world in the integrity of the United States.

Mr. STRICKLAND. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentleman for yielding to me.

Earlier today I had in my office a large number of members of the different posts of the Ohio American Legion. And we were talking about the fact that we have got so many young Americans and middle-aged Americans in Iraq. And I just want to share with the gentleman something that continues to gnaw at me. It causes me great personal concern because it is a matter that has yet to be recognized, admitted to, and corrected by this administration.

I have talked earlier in recent weeks about the fact that we sent our soldiers into harm's way without providing them with the most basic equipment of the body armor that was capable of giving them the fullest protection possible. As a result, I believe young Americans and some middle-aged Americans have lost their lives in Iraq because of the negligence of this administration and this Pentagon.

I have gone to Walter Reed Hospital and visited with soldiers; and some of the soldiers there have missing arms and legs, and I believe some of those terrible injuries are the result of our failure to provide them with the right kind of protection.

Now, I will talk a minute about the body armor; but I would also like to talk about the vehicles, the Humvees that are not adequately protected as a result of the negligence, the negligence of this Pentagon.

Way back in the early spring, I received a letter from one of my constituents who happens to be a West Point graduate, a young man who is serving this very night in Iraq; and he told me that his men did not have the interceptor vests, this high-quality vest that became available, I believe, in 1998. It costs about \$1,500 a piece, capable of stopping an AK-47 round. It is made of Kevlar and it has ceramic plates in both the front and back, designed to protect the core of a soldier's body, the vital organs of a soldier's body.

So I wrote Secretary Rumsfeld and I asked him when he was going to make sure that all of our soldiers were adequately equipped with this vest.

He wrote me back and he said sometime in mid-November. A couple of weeks later, I get a letter from General Myers, and he says, well, it is going to be in December.

Before we left this city for our holiday period, the Christmas period, the Pentagon held a briefing, and they said, well, it is going to be January. Now just last week we were told that there is an assumption that all of our soldiers in Iraq are equipped and perhaps all of our soldiers in Afghanistan, we do not know. There is no definitive statement on that, but certainly our soldiers in Kuwait do not yet have this equipment.

But there is something that bothers me even more because we have a large number of humvees and other vehicles in Iraq that are not sufficiently provided with armor, that when they drive over a bomb that is planted in the road, for example, the soldiers in those vehicles are protected as best they can possibly be protected.

One of the reasons this is of concern to me is because the company that is the sole provider of this armored vehicle, as well as the kits that can be used on the vehicles that are already in the theater and are not yet armored, that company is in Ohio. It is located near Cincinnati, Ohio. The President's going to be in Cleveland tomorrow for his 15th visit to Ohio since being President.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Mr. Speaker, speaking, of course, about the recovery.

Mr. STRICKLAND. That has not happened.

Mr. DELAHUNT. In Ohio.

Mr. STRICKLAND. In Ohio.

Mr. DELAHUNT. And elsewhere in America.

Mr. STRICKLAND. Mr. Speaker, I am going to be here tomorrow. If I was going to be in Ohio tomorrow and could speak to the President, I would ask him why he has not requested a sufficient amount of funding to provide these armored vehicles and the kits that can provide armory to the vehicles that are already over there so that our soldiers will not have their arms and legs blown off when they drive over these explosives.

Many of our soldiers are being killed, but many, many more are sustaining these terrible injuries as a result of the explosions that are occurring in Iraq, and the company officials have been to see me. They tell me that they can produce many more of these vehicles in a more rapid fashion, but the fact is that the President has not requested the money. It is a funding problem.

After this House has passed \$87 billion and the President's going to come back later and ask for \$50 billion for the effort in Iraq, we have got soldiers who have gone without body armor, and as most Americans are sitting in their homes safe and sound and as we stand here in this chamber, we have soldiers that are in harm's way simply because this administration has failed to provide them with the best protection possible.

I am not the President, but if I were, I would say to those beneath me, those in charge of the Pentagon and military equipment and the like, I would say correct this problem as quickly as possible, I do not care how much it takes; we are going to make sure our soldiers are protected as best we can protect them.

The sad fact is that we cannot protect them from all danger. The sad fact is that there will be continuing loss of life and continuing injuries, but at least we should do everything that we can possibly do within our power to make sure that our troops are adequately protected.

Mr. DELAHUNT. What you are speaking to is competence. It is just sheer incompetence. What the gentleman from Hawaii (Mr. Abercrombie) and I were discussing earlier in our conversation, it is credibility, credibility, and again, when we think of how we are treating our soldiers. I do not for a moment believe that any Member of Congress or the administration is not prepared and willing to do what is needed to be done or what is necessary to be done to protect our soldiers, but it comes down to incompetence.

Mr. STRICKLAND. Mr. Speaker, if my friend will yield, I want to believe what you are saying is true, but I have reason to believe that if the administration was willing to spend the necessary funds that we could provide this protection in a more rapid manner.

We are told that we did not expect the aftermath of the war to go as it has gone. We were told our soldiers are going to be welcomed; they will be throwing rose petals at us; we will be considered liberators and all of that. So obviously there was inadequate planning, and that is a sad fact, but this war has been going on for almost, what, a year or more?

Mr. ABERCROMBIE. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman would yield, in 10 days time it will be 1 year.

Mr. STRICKLAND. And the fact is that it should not take a year to correct a problem. It should not take months to get body armor to our troops. Do my colleagues know what the Pentagon is saying now? They are saying it will be at least the end of 2005 before the vehicles in Iraq are provided with this armor. That is much too long. How many soldiers are going to be injured between now and the end of 2005?

Mr. DELAHUNT. I agree but I would suggest that that is a by-product of just sheer incompetence by the civilian leadership, by the civilian leadership in the Department of Defense, not the military personnel because they are being sent into combat, but what is

intentional, and again, I dare say goes to the credibility of this President, is the way that these men and women are treated when they come back to the United States and hear that this President has underfunded veterans' medical health care to the point where the commander of the Veterans of Foreign Wars in this country described President Bush's budget as a sham, as a sham.

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

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

Mr. INSLEE. Mr. Speaker, the sad fact is that our proud men and women are not being treated with adequate dignity and respect when they come back, and some do not come back from Iraq. There are a thousand frustrations that we have been hearing across the Districts. Let me just give you one. I think it is typical of what happened, a small instance.

I have been working with the family of a soldier who was killed. He drowned in the Tigris River while trying to save an Iraqi policeman when they were on patrol. He died a hero in the service of his country. We tried to get his brother in from the Philippines to go to his funeral. You would not think that would be too much to ask when a man gave his life for his country and his family lost a husband and a son for their family. We could not even get the State Department to let his brother in for the funeral of this American soldier. Now, this was incompetence of the highest order.

I want to point out two things from my District as I now meet with the families who are now sending their sons and daughters and husbands and wives in the biggest movement of American military since World War II. That is going on right now, and thousands and thousands of Reservists and National Guard personnel are leaving their families and their jobs to go to a multi-year mission that we have no definition how long it will be unfortunately, and what I hear from them is two things.

Number 1, they believe that they deserve an administration that will shoot straight with them when it comes to their duty in this war, and I hear over and over again that they believe they are getting the short end of the stick because they are not getting the straight scoop even today about what is going on in Iraq. I will give you an example.

I had lunch with a proud father whose son is a marine who is I think in Baghdad tonight, just left a few weeks ago, and he is proud of his son, rightfully so. But he told me in no uncertain terms that he has a very high level of anger that his son is going into harm's way on a war that was based and started on a false premise, a false premise about the existence of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, and he says what he is most mad about is even today, when we know that premise was false, that the President of the United States continues to stonewall an inquiry to find out what happened in this sorry state of affairs.

That is what makes him angry; that when this Commission goes to look for this information, the President says, oh I do not have time, I will only give you an hour. He has time to go to rodeos; he has time to go to Ohio and time to fly to Florida, and he ought to have the time to answer the inquires of that father of that proud Marine who is in Baghdad tonight, and tell us why the Americans did not get the straight scoop when we went to Iraq?

This man told me this, and I thought this was an interesting comment because I would not think he would be thinking about fiscal issues while his son is in Baghdad, but he told me that he is angered that even today, when we are hundreds of billions of dollars into the Iraq expenditure, that even today, when this administration has run up a \$500 billion deficit, the largest deficit in American history and that is getting larger by the minute, even when we know we are going to be in Iraq for goodness knows how long, the President of the United States has not been square with the American people as to how much it is going to cost.

We have a \$500 billion deficit and we are spending billions of dollars today in Iraq. The President sends up to this Chamber a budget which is supposed to be an honest, forthright, meaningful prediction of the cost associated with running this government and he leaves out one thing, any money for fighting the Iraq war. Now, what does the White House think; that the American people do not know we are going to be spending billions of dollars in Iraq? This administration does not have the courage, I guess, to tell us how much it is going to cost or put \$1 in their budget for it.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Mr. Speaker, everybody knows, we all know, on both sides of the aisle, that we will receive a so-called supplemental budget. And those that are watching us this evening should understand that that is in addition to the budget that we pass. And it is going to come in absolutely with hundreds of billions of dollars, not just for Iraq and Afghanistan, but for other needs, right after November 2.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. Bonner). The Chair wishes to inform the Chamber that under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 2003, the Chair recognizes the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. Delahunt) for the remainder of the hour, which at this point is approximately 21 minutes.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Mr. Speaker, the gentleman just spoke about the deficit. We had some colleagues here earlier in an effort to defend the so-called prescription drug benefit that was passed on this floor back in December. Does my colleague recall that back in the course of this debate, and I know this is a digression from our focus of the issue of Iraq, but it does go to the credibility of this President, President Bush, does the gentleman remember the discussion and the debate that went on into the wee hours when there was not a single Member of Congress on both sides that did not accept the number \$400 billion as the cost of that proposal? And then weeks later, weeks later it was announced by this White House, the Bush White House, that their estimate was some \$537 billion? More than 35 percent.

What we discovered subsequently is that this administration, this President, had his Secretary of Health and Human Services over here lobbying, advocating right on the floor of the House, cajoling Members for some 3 hours. And he knew at that point in time that the real number was some \$537 billion, and not what we were told. This goes to credibility. This goes to exactly what David Kay told that British newspaper when he called on the Bush administration to come clean with the American people and admit it was wrong about the evidence of weapons of mass destruction. It is about coming clean and it is about credibility and it is about the truth.

Mr. INSLEE. If the gentleman will continue to yield, just for a moment. I would suggest, too, that this is for the administration's own benefit. It is certainly for our citizens' benefit, but it is also for the administration's own benefit. When Lee Iacocca, CEO of Chrysler, found out they were putting rebuilt engines in their Mustangs instead of new ones, he admitted that his organization had made a massive mistake and requested forgiveness of the American people. Frankly, it was granted. But it is difficult for the father of the Marine I had lunch with, whose son is now in harm's way in Baghdad, to grant forgiveness when even yet the President will not shoot straight about, number one, the cost of the Iraq war; or, two, not help us find out why we were given such massively inaccurate information. That just continues to fester a wound in the body public of this democracy. It would be to this administration's benefit to come clean about this information.

And another thing that we want our conservative friends across the aisle to share a belief in is accountability. We hear a lot about accountability and personal responsibility on this floor, but when a war is started based on a false premise, as in this case and only one person has lost his job as a result of that, and that is a radio personality, nobody in this administration has lost their job, nobody has had their hand slapped, nobody has had their pay docked, nobody has had a single word from the President of the United States castigating them for sending our people, many of whom are not coming home from a war based on a falsity, this President needs to demand accountability from this government. As of today, he has given us zero accountability and only marginal help at finding the truth.

Mr. ABERCROMBIE. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman will yield, that is precisely what a dialogue and discussion of a political nature is about in the United States of America. We will get accountability, and that accountability will be taking place. There is both the request for it and the demand for it. And, in fact, we will have an accounting and that accounting will be taking place in November. That is how we settle things in this country.

Not the way things are going to be settled in Iraq, I am sorry to say. Here is a headline from the Monday Washington Post: "The Iraq council signs interim constitution. Powerful Shiite cleric criticizes new law."

Without going into all the details of the signing of this document by a hand-picked group of people by the United States of America, the observation made in the course of a

discussion of what the Shiite council members would seek by way of amendment or an addendum to the interim constitution when that government assumes its sovereignty on June 30, quoting from the article in The Washington Post, "Although the U.S.-led occupation's authority is set to transfer political power that day, i.e. June 30, it is likely to maintain a military presence in Iraq for years to come."

That is what we have to face. This is a question of deliberate policy. This is a question of judgment. And the judgment that is made by the American people in the voting booth is their sentence, is what they pass on that judgment. This is the conclusion that they come to.

Our obligation, it seems to me, here in the House of Representatives, in the time allotted to us and in the arena given to us by these special orders, is to try to lay before the American people what the consequences are of these policies, these judgments that were made, and the consequences of the action taken as a result of those judgments.

Mr. Speaker, the sad part about it for me is that the vehicle we have for this, once you are outside of the political arena per se, is journalism, is the various media, electronic, written and otherwise. They are the ones that are falling down. They are the ones not asking the hard questions and allowing this kind of situation to develop without any kind of adequate inquiry. So it remains for us to do it here.

We have to have an understanding here that what is taking place in Iraq today is the direct result of decisions taken based on judgments made and responsibility that has to be taken for those judgments. The fact that no one has been fired, the fact that no one has been brought to account is something that should not be a shock to anyone. Nobody is going to take responsibility for this unless the American people demand it in the voting booth.

Mr. STRICKLAND. Mr. Speaker, I think the American people realize who ultimately has to be accountable. Harry Truman said it: "The buck stops here." The Oval Office is where the responsibility lies.

I can understand why the American people can be confused. We have talked about several things tonight. We have talked about the body armor and the ill-equipped troops. We have talked about the Medicare bill and the fact it is going to cost more than we were told and will provide an inadequate benefit. I noticed the other side earlier was saying it is not a perfect bill. You can bet your life it is not a perfect bill; it is a terrible bill. It is going to cost much more than we were told it was going to cost. The deficit is going to be well over \$500 billion this year, with no end in sight.

If I can mention education, we had a primary in Ohio with well over 200 education ballots that people were called to vote upon. More than half failed. People are wondering why are we not funding the No Child Left Behind bill at an adequate level. And then, we all understand that the President, as the gentleman from Washington (Mr. Inslee) said, did not ask for a single dime for the Iraq war in the budget he sent us; but we all know as

soon as the election is over, the President is going to come to this House and ask for at least an additional \$50 billion for Iraq.

I think people are wondering why can we not have affordable drugs for our senior citizens, why can we not adequately fund our schools, why can we not provide the kind of health care that our veterans have been promised and deserve, why can we not adequately equip our troops and start paying down this deficit rather than pushing this burden into the outyears onto the backs of our children. The answer is the President has set out an agenda which is to give massive tax cuts to the richest people in this country, to spend on the building of Iraq and the rebuilding of Iraq.

My people are not selfish along the Ohio River in eastern and southeastern Ohio. They are good, hardworking, honest American citizens. They are wondering why our schools cannot be built and rehabbed and modernized, and we are spending that money in Iraq. We are not going to get a transportation bill unless something happens and there is some kind of an agreement. We are told the President may even veto the transportation funding at the Senate-passed level. My constituents are asking, What about our infrastructure? What about our roads and bridges? What about our sewer and water needs? And yet we are pouring our national resources into Iraq, and as the gentleman from Hawaii (Mr. Abercrombie) said, we have no idea what is going to happen with that government over there.

Mr. ABERCROMBIE. Mr. Speaker, we do know one thing, we have competition in Ohio for who is going to build those highways; but in Iraq we know it is going to be Halliburton and the rest of the hand-picked construction companies which will be pocketing the profits.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Mr. Speaker, we understand and I continue to hear the word ``recovery." We know it is a jobless recovery, but it is not a jobless recovery for those who live in Iraq. It is a lot of no-show jobs going on over in Iraq. And as we discussed in our last session, certain individuals are doing very well by the American taxpayers. There is a budget for Iraq, and there is a budget for the United States; and they are both being paid for by the American taxpayer.

Mr. STRICKLAND. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman would yield, I was watching television over the weekend, and I saw Mr. Richard Pearl being interviewed about why we are trying to provide universal health care for Iraq. He was trying to give the reasons why that was justified. He was asked, What about the American citizen? He said Well, it is a different situation. The problems of health care in Iraq are so terrible, and this is something we ought to pursue.

Mr. Speaker, my constituents are kind, caring, gracious people; but they have a hard time understanding why the steelworkers losing their jobs along the Ohio

River, and as a result of bankruptcy of the steel industry, losing their health benefits as retirees, many of them in their mid-fifties with health problems, no insurance company

wants them; and even if they could get an insurance company that would sell them a policy, they could not possibly afford it because they have no job, and these people are wondering why we have a double standard when it comes to our willingness to do what this administration, this President says he wants to do for Iraq when the people who built this country worked hard, played by the rules, many of them fought in our wars, are wondering why they are considered to be second priorities instead of first priorities. I think that is a legitimate issue. I wish I was in Cleveland tomorrow and had an opportunity to talk to the President while he was there. I would like to ask him those questions on behalf of my constituents.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Mr. Speaker, I listened to the President's remarks this evening. They were transmitted on CNN. He described those who are concerned about the outsourcing of American jobs, with an implication that somehow those who have a concern about jobs in America are something less than free and fair traders, and that is T-R-A-D-E-R-S, and should be called economic isolationists.

Mr. INSLEE. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman would yield, I think it is important in this discussion to say we are as hopeful as credibility can allow for the ultimate outcome in Iraq. We are hopeful that this constitution in Iraq will bear benefits, that a stable government will develop in Iraq, that the Kurds will enter a federation and not end up in a civil war. We are hopeful that will happen.

But what we are saying is we need the administration to be honest with us and the American people so we can deal with challenges at home, one of which is this jobs issue. We could be creating thousands of good-paying jobs by creating new infrastructure, but we cannot do that because this administration has not been forthright with us about the true cost of the Iraq war. One of the reasons that we are not growing jobs in this country in transportation infrastructure is because the President has refused to be honest with us about the cost of the Iraq war.

Mr. DELAHUNT. And be honest with us about the cost of the prescription drug benefit proposal put forth by his party and his White House.

Mr. STRICKLAND. And be honest with us about the true cost of the No Child Left Behind education bill. It starts adding up.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Mr. Speaker, it comes down to the question posed here on the cover of Time magazine, Does Bush have a credibility gap? And clearly there is substantial evidence that would lead to the conclusion that there is a profound credibility gap.

Mr. ABERCROMBIE. Mr. Speaker, with respect to the trenchant commentary that the gentleman from Washington (Mr. Inslee) just presented to us, I too am aware of the designation by Mr. Bush by those who are protesting or are concerned about the outsourcing of jobs overseas, the loss of jobs, the jobless recovery as being economic isolationists.

I would suggest to Mr. Bush that if you want to see someone who is isolated economically, just take a look at somebody who is unemployed. Then you are going to understand what true isolation is, where you are bereft of any capacity to pay your bills, to meet your obligations, to know that you will have healthcare, to be able to take care of your elderly parents, to have some semblance of dignity. The true economic isolate in this country is the person who is unemployed.

Mr. INSLEE. If the gentleman will yield, I would offer a theory perhaps as to why the administration has in numerous ways expressed kind of a tone deafness to the economic outcry to people going on concerned about their jobs.

You saw the administrative report basically saying that outsourcing was not a problem at all, which the White House then tried to disavow, even though the President signed the report which said that, which I saw in the Washington Post today. You saw various efforts by the administration to teach businesses how not to pay overtime to American employees, which I thought was a little bit not what most people would expect of our government to do and use our taxpayer dollars, to teach people not to pay legally-owed overtime. That is distressing.

So there is a lack of understanding, and I am not sure the administration understands the huge black cloud of doubt and worry out there, because the American people understand that even though there might be some good numbers out there in various economic indicators, the fact of the matter is, for the first time since Herbert Hoover was President, this President has not created one single net job in America, not one single net job in America.

We have lost over 2.5 million jobs. We have got to get 2.5 million jobs back before we can even claim that one new job has been created on a net basis in this country. This has created enormous anxiety, as it should, in our Nation, that then affects the people.

Mr. DELAHUNT. That is only half of the story. I think it is very important that those that are watching us tonight in our hour ``hour of conversation" understand that not only have we lost millions of jobs, but, as the gentleman indicated, we create and we lose, and it is netted out to some 2.5 million jobs we have lost. He will be the next Herbert Hoover. But, do you know what is happening? It is not just a jobless recovery, it is a wage recession. That is really important, that those that are unaware be given that information. The jobs that are replacing the jobs that are lost are coming in at a wage level some 22 percent less than the jobs that they replace.

Mr. STRICKLAND. If the gentleman will yield, I am from Ohio, and Ohio probably as much or more than most States has suffered and is continuing to suffer from job loss. 286,000 jobs have been lost in Ohio, 160,000 manufacturing jobs, and the replacement jobs are estimated to pay on average 34 percent less than the jobs that have been lost. That is the cold, hard facts about Ohio.

Mr. ABERCROMBIE. As we conclude then, I might add, however, there are plenty of jobs for those who want to take them up over in Iraq working for Halliburton or working for one of the other companies that got the preferential treatment. So I think when we come to our next "Iraq Watch," we should have well in mind what the consequences have been for the American people, the American taxpayer, the American soldier