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Iraq Watch We Need to Give Our Troops Enough Support September 3, 2003

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 2003, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. Hoeffel) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. HOEFFEL. Mr. Speaker, the House is back in session this week. And on the first evening back in session, we are resuming the Iraq Watch.

This is an effort that has been going on since late in the spring, primarily by four of us here on the floor of the House, the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. Delahunt), the gentleman from Hawaii (Mr. Abercrombie), and the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. Emanuel), to raise questions about our policies in Iraq, to suggest corrections in those policies, to ask questions about the diplomacies leading up to military action, to ask questions about the intelligence relating to weapons of mass destruction, the use of that intelligence, the presence and whereabouts and the custody of those weapons of mass destruction, fundamentally questions about whether we are winning the peace and what exit strategy we have and when we will turn Iraq back to the Iraqis.

I know my colleagues have a lot of things to say tonight because a lot has been happening since we were last in session, and much of it bad, in Iraq, and we all have our own focus we would like to put on the debate this evening.

I am going to open up and ask some questions focused on the fundamental issue of credibility, and I am then going to turn to the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. Emanuel) who has a conflicting time commitment, if my colleagues will agree, for the points that he would like to make in just a few minutes.

There are so many unanswered questions about credibility relating to our actions in Iraq. Why did the White House press the CIA to approve misleading language in the State of the Union, suggesting that Hussein was uranium shopping throughout Africa, when the White House knew that that information was not accurate? Why did the administration hype alleged strong ties between Saddam Hussein and al Qaeda, although those ties have never been established? Why did the White House exaggerate the threat of the weapons of mass destruction themselves and hype both the nature of those weapons and the urgency of the danger caused by those weapons?

The real threat that I see posed by Hussein, who was clearly a murderous tyrant who used weapons of mass destruction in the past against innocent civilians, the real threat was his potential to restart those weapons of mass destruction programs, including the ability and perhaps the desire on his part to restart or even purchase nuclear weapons if the international community lost its focus, if the focus and pressure for resumption of international inspections were to have been set aside, or if sanctions were lifted or if we simply lost interest. That was the threat from Saddam Hussein.

Why did President Bush not stick to that? Why did he exaggerate the threat caused by weapons of mass destruction and these other alleged ties that have not come to pass? We know now that these claims by the administration were exaggerated.

Last fall, in the lead-up to the congressional vote, the administration publicly and privately stated with complete certainty that Hussein had weapons of mass destruction, that he was seeking more; that his chemical and biological and nuclear programs were well underway; that there were ties between al Qaeda and Hussein; that he had these weapons, he was trying to get more and he was likely to give them away to terrorists. Now we know from declassified intelligence documents that at this very same time the administration was being told by our intelligence agencies that there was a great deal of uncertainty about the status of the weapons of mass destruction in Iraq.

The Defense Intelligence Agency report of September 2002 and the national intelligence estimate of October 2002 raised serious doubts about this, used phrases like no credible evidence of an Iraqi chemical weapon program. Yet the administration publicly and privately said it is a sure thing, we count on it, we have got to stop it.

Does this matter? Maybe this is the question that we need to address. Does this pattern of deception matter? Do the ends not justify the means? Should we not all be rejoicing that Saddam Hussein is out of power?

I think this pattern of deception does matter because the administration's credibility is shot as a result of this, and when the administration's credibility is shot, our national credibility is threatened. It matters when a government uses deception to try to achieve its goals because that deception can become a habit. It can be habit forming and we reach a point where the government loses its credibility and its moral stature.

The administration oversold the need for war. They oversold the prospects of winning the peace. They oversimplified the challenge of bringing liberty and democracy to Iraq, all the while insisting that we could do this on our own unilaterally, without the help of our traditional alliance, the Western alliances, and in the international community, willingly proclaiming all this time that the U.S. and Britain should be known as the occupying powers, the occupying powers in Iraq, and ignoring the international institutions and the assets they can bring to bear to help a people become a free people and develop democratic institutions. It is time for the administration to level with the American people, to stop this pattern of deception that undermines the work we are trying to achieve.

The President should answer seven questions. The first is he should tell us how long the military occupation is going to take, how long will it last.

Secondly, how much will the military occupation cost? The current estimates are \$1 billion a week, \$4 billion a month, to maintain our military occupation.

Thirdly, how long is the reconstruction going to take?

Fourthly, how much will that cost? Most estimates I have seen, \$20 billion a year for at least 5 years. That is \$100 billion to reconstruct Iraq.

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

Mr. HOEFFEL. I yield to the gentleman from Massachusetts.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Mr. Speaker, while we were back in our districts working this past month, I am sure the gentleman noticed the announcement put out by the Congressional Budget Office in terms of the deficit that is accruing day by day on the future of the American taxpayers. If my colleague knows the number, I would like to hear it.

Mr. HOEFFEL. A \$450 billion deficit.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Mr. Speaker, I have to say that my colleague is wrong, my dear friend from Philadelphia. The CBO, the Congressional Budget Office, predicts the deficit for the next fiscal year will be \$480 billion, \$480 billion. And in the course of the past several years, just this past year, 1.4 million Americans fell below the poverty line. And my colleague is speaking tonight in terms of just simply for the reconstruction of Iraq, rebuilding Iraq, if you will, \$20 billion a year for 5 years.

Mr. HOEFFEL. Mr. Speaker, the fiscal picture is bleak. It is daunting. One of the things the President has to tell us is how we are going to finance his reconstruction plans in Iraq, because I do not know how we are going to pay for it. The gentleman is absolutely right to bring that up, and I can see the gentleman from Illinois is anxious to make a point.

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

Mr. HOEFFEL. I yield to the gentleman from Illinois.

Mr. EMANUEL. Mr. Speaker, I am anxious to make a point. I am glad my colleague started on this, asking the administration to come forward with what is our exit strategy, how long will the American troops be there and what will be the total cost to the American taxpayer.

My colleague knows that since 2001, about 3 million Americans have lost their jobs, 5 million more Americans have lost their health insurance, to the record heights of people working without health insurance. Nearly \$1 trillion worth of corporate assets have been foreclosed on, and more than 1 million Americans have walked out of the middle class to poverty in this country. Yet at the same time, the United States Government has pledged \$8 billion dollars to pay Iraqi Government salaries for people who do not show up for work in Iraq, \$7 billion for repairs to public works and services, \$5 billion in humanitarian aid and \$3 billion to settle 1 million Iraqi refugees next year alone. That is some of the costs the American taxpayer is being asked to foot while we have record-high unemployment, record foreclosures, losses of health insurance, no plan for middle-class families to afford their college education.

I come from Chicago. We think we know something about no-show jobs. The notion there would be close to 100,000 Iraqis getting a salary with no-show jobs can make a workman in Chicago a little jealous; but let alone that over the summer, while we were also gone, America experienced an unprecedented blackout where the infrastructure and America's electrical grid was short and not capable of handling the type of economy we have. At the same time, the head of Iraq's reconstruction, American counsel Paul Bremer announced that he would like \$2 billion to rebuild the Iraqi electric grid. Yet here in the United States we were the ones with the

blackout, and we cannot get a single dollar from the administration to help rebuild our electric grid which is an important piece of our economic infrastructure to allow the economy to grow. As many people said, we have a world-class economy sitting on top of a Third World economic grid. Yet Iraq, \$2 billion to the electric grid; America, a blackout.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Mr. Speaker, what was the cost to our economy of the blackout that I think was of a 12- to maybe 24-hour duration, what was the cost?

Mr. EMANUEL. Billions of dollars.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Billions of dollars, and yet we cannot find the money here to invest in America.

Mr. EMANUEL. Mr. Speaker, one thing I want to run the statistics by is the people who remember, because I think it is often in this administration where the right hand misses what the left hand is doing.

In the area of health care, there is a proposal for 13 million Iraqis, half the population, to get universal health care. Yet America now has record-high uninsured in this country, with no plan on the table. A hospital and clinic in Baghdad is operating and one in every city will be up and running.

In education, there are proposals on the table to rebuild 1,200 schools in Iraq. Yet the administration fights and it does not have a single dollar for rebuilding and modernizing America's schools.

There are 25,000 units of affordable housing in Iraq, yet only 5,000 proposed here for the United States.

In the area of infrastructure we have a 10 percent cut in the Corps of Engineers proposed by the administration; yet the deepwater port of Umm Qsar in Iraq will be built from top to bottom.

We have a plan for Iraq's reconstruction and its economic growth in the future, and yet the entire proposal here for the United States is blackouts, cuts in education, cuts in health care, cuts in infrastructure and cuts in housing. My point is the American people, ever since World War II, have been unbelievably generous and they will continue to be. Yet we cannot offer the Iraqi people a future that is brighter than the one we are proposing for our own children.

I do want to add one point away from the financing to the issue of the loss of lives of Americans in Iraq. Some people have gone to Iraq and come back and said, what we need is more American troops. The fact is, we need more American allies, not more American troops.

Second is, there have been four major battles since the post-Cold War: Gulf War 1, Bosnia, Kosovo and Gulf War 2. In every war except for this war, the democratic nations of the world have spoken with one voice against tyranny, and the loss of life by Americans has been minimal. There is only one war where the democratic nations of the world were divided and the loss of life by Americans has surpassed all other wars.

Foreign policy based on "my way or the highway" has not served our men and women correctly. They deserve better. Their families are facing losses. They are doing their job under tremendous stress, unbelievably well, and we should have a foreign policy that brings people together to speak for democratic values in one voice, and yet we are not doing that. The American servicemen and -women are bearing a burden that is not being shared, and the American taxpayer is paying a price that is not being shared. The consequence both here at home and overseas in Iraq is devastating to Americans, and we deserve to give the American people and our

American men and women in uniform a better national agenda and an international posture than the one they have been getting.

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

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

Mr. ABERCROMBIE. Mr. Speaker, not only was that well stated, not only was the logistics of the politics well stated, but the sentiments expressed by yourself and by the previous speakers take us then to the question of what are we to do? The difficulty I think that has been faced by those of us who had reservations, if not outright opposition, to the attack on Baghdad, which is what the initial military activity was, because we feared that a war in Iraq would then erupt, one for which we were not prepared, I think the difficulties associated with the thrust of their remarks made to this point is that the American people said, well, where is this opposition, what does it mean, why are we not coming forward with it?

We were drowned, literally, in the rhetorical excesses and visual stimulus of embedded media, following along with and literally with the troops. We were regaled with admonitions to support the troops by virtue of not questioning the policies that sent those troops in in the first place, and not analyzing the context and circumstances under which those troops were placed in harm's way. And I do not think we can avoid that any longer.

How are we to deal with the analysis of the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. Hoeffel) regarding the circumstances under which we entered and what has taken place? How are we to deal with the questions raised by the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. Delahunt) about the deficits, about the costs that are associated, the literal costs? How are we to deal with the elegant formulation by the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. Emanuel) of the juxtaposition between that which is required for us in the United States to deal with our basic needs and that which is required for the Iraqi people under the circumstances over which we now, ostensibly, have control and obligation? What are we to do?

The gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. Hoeffel) and I, earlier this evening, engaged in a discussion with one another about, well, how should we address this question? And I think, if my colleague will allow me just a moment or two more, I want to posit what I think needs to be done or at least what needs to be done in terms of a dialogue.

We established a governing cabinet which, according to The New York Times yesterday, is the Iraqi Governing Council. It says we have right now, and by we I am talking about the so-called coalition, because that is all it is. There may be some attendance on the periphery, but we have Great Britain, and we have the United States. Great Britain is now going through the throes of its own investigations and self-analysis. Who knows how long the Prime Minister will even be in office, let alone the support there. But it says we now have an Iraqi Governing Council, I am quoting The New York Times from yesterday, ``appointed a 25-member cabinet today to begin taking over day-to-day control of the government. The Iraqi ministers appointed today are to take over important portfolios in foreign affairs, finance, internal security and oil."

Now, my suggestion is if that is in fact the case, and if one accepts the premise for discussion sake that the motives for going into Iraq were sound, even if the process and the planning was inadequate at best, then this has been achieved. There was an attack on Baghdad. There was an occupation that took place. We now have a 25-member governing council to take over all of these areas. When are we going to bring the troops home?

The same paper announces, the same news media announces yesterday that two U.S. military officers have died, another wounded when their Humvee hit a bomb along a highway in southern Baghdad. The military police brigade was traveling along a main supply route at 3:19 p.m. in the afternoon when their vehicle hit "an improvised explosive device."

Mr. DELAHUNT. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman will yield for just a moment. As he refers to that particular incident, I want to take a moment to express my most profound condolences to a particular family, the Caldwell family of Quincy, Massachusetts, which is my hometown, the birthplace of John Adams and John Quincy Adams. The Caldwell family lost their son, their brother, in that particular incident. The war has come home to Quincy and to the United States.

Mr. ABERCROMBIE. Mr. Speaker, as we stand here speaking, airplanes are coming in every day and every night discharging the wounded. When we can manage to get people acknowledged in the newspaper or on the television as having been killed in Iraq, and I say when we manage to get them acknowledged because more and more this is fading from the front page, this is fading from the A section of the newspaper. We have to pay attention to ex-steroid users running for governor out in California. We are competing with that right now. The clown show is taking place on C-SPAN II right now. Maybe tonight we can forgive the fact that the media once again are not here to record what might be said or not said here with respect to Iraq and its implications because they are watching the clown show. It is no clown show at Bethesda Naval Hospital. It is no clown show at Walter Reed Hospital, where now the grievously wounded are in the thousands.

I suppose one could make an argument if it was in the dozens that it might be more acceptable. But it is not. We have the spectacle of the President of the United States now backtracking from the show that he put on on the aircraft carrier, that shameless display of arrogance and hubris. Oh, that was the end of major combat operations. So the family to which my colleague referred, are they supposed to take some comfort with the idea that their son died in a minor confrontation, a minor incident? There is nothing minor about the deaths and grievous wounding of American men and women in combat in Iraq.

Mr. EMANUEL. Mr. Speaker, if my colleague will yield for one last comment. In Bosnia, the United States troops share a burden with other Democratic nations under the command of a United States general. They are not serving under anybody else's command. There has not been any major deaths post combat. That is true also in Kosovo.

Mr. ABERCROMBIE. None. Zero.

Mr. EMANUEL. Right. This is the only war post combat, after the President has declared hostilities have ceased, that there have been more deaths in the aftermath of the war than during the war.

Again, I think it comes back to the fact that Saddam Hussein is a tyrant. That is not an arguable fact. The arguable fact was are we going to do this alone, or should we have done the hard work that was done by the first Bush Presidency, of calling up allies, calling up friends, having the Democratic nations of the world and others speak as one voice about ridding the world of an aggressive act.

But in this war, because we refused to do the hard work of listening and persuading and talking, deciding to go alone, deciding to make other political points, more Americans have died after the hostilities have ceased than prior. It is a policy that does not do justice to the sacrifice on the ground by our men and women. It is the only war post the Cold War in which, as I always say, the Democratic nations were divided, not united. And because of that, and because of the result that we do not have other American allies but we have mainly

American men and women there, more Americans, such as the family from the gentleman's district who he just spoke about, touching all of us about how it has come home, this war.

There has not been an exit strategy provided for. We have not talked about what it takes to bring allies to bear, about burden sharing. We can do better. The American people and the American servicemen and women deserve better.

And then there is a whole discussion about the reconstruction of Iraq. At a time when the American people are paying astronomical taxes, property taxes, seeing service cuts at their schools, having their health care costs explode, having the cost of a college education for their kids explode, with no plan provided for that, and yet there are some in this Chamber and across the hall whose recommendation to the American people is we will stay the course. We will put more American troops, more American hard-earned dollars to work in Iraq while here at home that is not the recipe that the American people deserve. They deserve a plan for here as much as for Iraq. They deserve a policy that says we will bring Democratic nations together, not divide them.

Mr. HOEFFEL. Mr. Speaker, just quickly, I wish to ask the gentleman from Illinois if in his review of our military history, and I know his statements are accurate and insightful, has he ever come across an example where an American President has taunted the enemy to "bring it on"? Has my colleague ever seen an example where after victory is declared, while Americans are continuing to die post declaration of victory due to a guerilla war, that the President of the United States taunted the opponents to "bring it on" and subsequent to that taunt another 60 or 70 Americans have been assassinated in this guerilla opposition in Iraq?

And my question to all three of my colleagues, and the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. Delahunt) talked about the war coming home to Quincy, what does the President say to those families? It is a tough enough job for the Commander in Chief in good faith to deal with any death to any American serviceman or woman, but what does he say to the families when he said on that day we have enough force in Iraq to protect our own troops so bring them on? What does he say to those that have died since?

Mr. EMANUEL. Well, Mr. Speaker, having worked in the White House, I want to be clear, I do not think anybody here is saying the President, and I am sure the President, the First Lady, and the entire administration feels for every one of these families. Having worked in the White House, I think we all know there are things either a President or even ourselves have said that we wish we had never said.

Mr. DELAHUNT. I do not think anybody doubts that at all.

Mr. EMANUEL. But when the President said "bring it on," it was close to putting, unfortunately I think given the guerilla warfare and the terrorists that have now come into Iraq, I think it has put a target on the American service people that existed before but only heightened given the war psychology and world opinion that terrorists are playing against this administration. I do not know of another time a President has ever done that or an administration has done that.

I want to add one other thing. I think Mr. Bremer said that in a few weeks from now Iraq will run out of money, and they will have to come to the United States for more financial assistance for all the reconstruction they are planning. I plan on reintroducing my American parity bill that says whatever we plan on spending in Iraq for housing, health care, infrastructure, economic growth, salaries, for no-show jobs, we have to do the same here at home.

They should not have a better housing plan than what we plan for here at home. They should not have a better education plan in Iraq than we have for modernizing our schools. They should not have a better health care plan

for half the population when we have nothing for our population. So I will be introducing that bill as an amendment to the Iraq reconstruction supplemental, that we should have an American parity act.

I am going to vote to help Iraq, but I am not voting for deconstruction in the United States.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Mr. Speaker, my friend knows that he will have three colleagues that will be cosponsoring that particular amendment with him. And I daresay that when my colleague alluded earlier to the proposal to provide universal health care coverage for half of the Iraqi population as well as 100 percent maternity coverage for Iraqi women, maybe, just maybe, we could convince our colleagues in the House to restore the \$95 billion that they cut from the Medicaid.

Mr. EMANUEL. One out of four children in America are covered by Medicaid for the maternal care. So the cuts in Medicaid affect directly the newborn children and the health care coverage, where we are talking about universal coverage in Iraq.

Mr. ABERCROMBIE. Mr. Speaker, I wish to add an addendum to the last point the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. Emanuel) made when he talked about the no-show jobs. The problem we have in the United States now is people are showing up and there are no jobs. They want to have a job.

We have lost two-plus million jobs, manufacturing jobs, in this country. There are plenty of people who want to show up for work, but the work is not there because it is being out sourced overseas. Because we are providing an opportunity for the Vice President's cronies in Halliburton and all these other construction companies to send mercenaries overseas to make the big dollars off of the taxpayer dollar here.

I want to see people at work in the United States. When we have a prosperous United States, we can start worrying about carrying the burden for the rest of the world.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Those that will be employed by Halliburton in Iraq will be Iraqis. They will not be Americans. The low-wage jobs and the medium-wage jobs will be Iraqis. Meanwhile, as earlier stated, in this country we have lost 3 million jobs. And ironically, of course, the unemployment rate is going down by two-tenths of a point from 6.4 to 6.2 percent because we are not counting people anymore.

We now have a new category called the discouraged worker because he or she has been looking for a job, whether it be in Ohio, Massachusetts or Hawaii or Pennsylvania, and as has been indicated, those manufacturing jobs are leaving this country daily. They cannot find a job. They are discouraged and their unemployment has been exhausted, so they no longer count as American workers. They are discouraged workers.

Mr. ABERCROMBIE. Mr. Speaker, as President Bush is so fond of saying, help is on the way. Let me read from the Wall Street Journal of yesterday:

A consortium of 13 international banks, lead by J.P. Morgan Chase and company, was chosen to lead the newly created Trade Bank of Iraq. I thought it was going to be the United States was going to get some help. No, we have J.P. Morgan and 13 international banks, and they are going to put together something called the Trade Bank of Iraq.

The coalition authority that I just referred to, the 25-member coalition authority which is now in charge of finance, according to the New York Times, in Iraq created the Trade Bank to allow Iraqi ministries to begin making "big ticket purchases abroad."

This is all a corporate scam and the country has to wake up to the fact that we are utilizing our young men and women in harm's way in the military uniform of the United States to carry out the corporate interests of this administration, and that Iraq, if not before now, is a quicksand of corporate endeavor on behalf of profit-taking by corporations utilizing the all-volunteer force of the United States, and we have to take seriously whether or not we are going to allow it to continue.

My view is, and I put it forward for consideration, that if we are going to deal with this situation straightforwardly, we have to talk about letting this 25-member authority take over. They say they are in charge of finance, they are in charge of security, they are in charge of trade, they are in charge of banking, in charge of oil, let them be in charge. Bring the American troops on out of there and let that Iraqi authority set the terms and conditions under which the United Nations will come in and help put this together.

I am perfectly willing to vote funds because we caused this problem, funds that will enable the Iraqi people to get back on their feet, provided it is done in an international context at the behest of and request of the Iraqi authority which we supposedly have not only set up but now have in charge of these various ministries.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Mr. Speaker, let me just segue into an observation that was made by the general who successfully commanded the coalition, the true coalition of the willing in Gulf War I, and that is General Schwarzkopf, and he was recently interviewed. It was on one of the Sunday morning magazines and he was talking about the troops and his concern for the morale of the troops and the suggestion that more troops are needed to provide stability and security before this particular White House can rebuild Iraq.

I am just going to quote some excerpts from his statement. This is General Schwarzkopf. "I do not think, based on the information we are hearing ahead of time, that anybody thought Iraq was going to be anywhere near as tough an egg to crack as it has become. We did not have a rotation policy at that time." He was talking about rotating American military personnel in and out. "We were just going to go in, the people were going to throw flowers at our feet, and everybody was going to welcome democracy and we were all going to go back home. But I think we really became very surprised by the amount of resistance we have run into since. The number of deaths that has been inflicted on our troops, and it happens every day, and that has a very, very eroding effect on the morale. Believe me, when someone is shooting at you and you cannot shoot back, I know from experience because I have been through that." That is General Schwarzkopf.

What are we doing? What are we inflicting on the American military?

We have all sponsored a resolution urging the President of the United States to seek a new United Nations resolution making the United Nations part of the solution, under the command of the U.S. military when it comes to the security issue, but making them part of this enormous effort of nation-building because that is what this administration is about; it is about nation-building. And the costs, and we hear it again and again. We talk about \$4 billion a month.

As Members know, and we have been joined by the gentleman from Washington (Mr. Inslee), that \$4 billion a month, that \$50 billion a year is just for a military presence. It does not involve rebuilding Iraq. It does not involve nation-building. This White House, this administration, upon coming to office, derided nation-building, and yet they have embraced nation-building in a magnitude that is mind-boggling; and some within the administration, some within the administration, not Secretary Powell, because I understand he is attempting to negotiate a new U.N. resolution, but some want to go it alone. We cannot afford it either in terms of American lives or American dollars. We are going to go broke.

The gentleman from Hawaii (Mr. Abercrombie) mentioned Gulf War I under the leadership of the father of the current President. He did create a true coalition. The cost of that war to the American people, the total cost, was a little over \$4 billion. That is the cost of just sustaining our military presence in Iraq now for a month, and we are going to be there for years.

Mr. HOEFFEL. Mr. Speaker, not only is the administration engaging in a unilateral nation-building, but I would submit it is a stealth nation-building because they do not want to tell us the cost, the length, how many troops might be needed, how many more civilians of all manner might be needed. I think we need to ask the President three fundamental questions. The first is what is in store in Iraq, what is it going to cost and how long is it going to take?

Secondly, what is he doing to build the international support that he has finally acknowledged that we need, as the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. Delahunt) has just referred to. What can we expect him to do to reach out to the international community to get their assets and their troops, if necessary, and their civilian reconstruction experts into the mix. And as the gentleman from Hawaii (Mr. Abercrombie) has been saying all night and in private conversation as well, the third question is how soon do we put the Iraqis back in charge, and what is the administration prepared to do to put the Iraqis back in charge?

I would respectfully say to the gentleman from Hawaii (Mr. Abercrombie) that the Iraqi governing coalition is not ready to run those ministries that have been identified, and I think the gentleman knows that, too. They are not ready. We need the President to tell us when, and I yield to the gentleman.

Mr. ABERCROMBIE. I do not wish to dispute who is ready and who is not. All we can account for is ourselves. We were not ready, and now these poor people have to bear the brunt of our failure to be ready. I understand that. But the question here that I have raised here is what in fact is the role of the United States and these troops? How do we make it work? Let me put it this way, that is not an argument.

In my dreams I keep thinking Thomas Edward Lawrence, where are you, come back. Lawrence, come back and tell us what it is we are forgetting.

What do we think we can do when people made an argument back in World War I that the Arabs were not ready. This was a Western concept. This is people coming in from the outside telling somebody else that they were not ready. They were not ready to have the French divide up and the English divide up Iraq for their political purposes, but they were certainly ready to do whatever it was that they felt was necessary.

I am sure that the colonial armies under George Washington were not ready. Cornwallis was wandering all over, wandering through Maryland and New Jersey, wandering through upstate New York; and back in England they said, We have got to get out. It does not matter whether they are ready or not. We are going to be adrift with our people being picked off one by one in the American Revolutionary War. We are facing the same kind of situation in terms of the material prospect for the military of the United States in Iraq today. It is not up to us to decide whether or not they are ready.

Let me tell what one of the members of the governing council said yesterday. Abdel Aziz Hakim, the brother of Ayatollah Hakim who was killed in the car bomb, a member of the United States appointed governing council to which I have referred this evening told mourners, and I quote, and this is from The Washington Post of yesterday, "The occupation force is primarily responsible for the pure blood that was spilled in holy Najaf, the blood of Hakim and the faithful group that was present near the mosque. Iraq must not remain occupied and the occupation must leave so we can build Iraq as God wants us to do."

My point is we are dealing with a situation in which we do not have the prerogative of decisionmaking other than what we do about ourselves and for ourselves. We cannot decide for others. If the argument was, and again I do not want to dispute that because we have Members on this floor who voted for the resolution, who did not vote for the resolution who had different ideas what that resolution meant or did not mean, that is not an issue. I have no intention of pointing fingers and extracting some kind of admissions about what might have been the true faith at the time.

What I am saying is we now face a situation in which we have to make a determination whether our continued presence is a positive or negative force and what should constitute our continued presence.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Those questions are not being posed. And that same story that was quoted yesterday that the gentleman quoted from, the funeral of that particular Ayatollah who was a moderate leader among the Shiite community in southern Iraq, where some would suggest there has been stability and some limited progress has been made, things are beginning, they are in the process of falling apart.

A piece of that story that the gentleman did not read is extremely disturbing when it comes to our role. His brother's clarion call resounded with the crowd. I am quoting from that same story. Mourners who came from as far away as Basra and Baghdad beat themselves with chains in the traditional ritual for mourning religious martyrs and chanted "death to America."

We have to be listening very, very carefully. There is a growing anger, not just in the so-called Suni triangle, not just in Tikrit, but all over Iraq in terms of the American presence. That is why I would suggest it is absolutely critical that we internationalize the presence.

Mr. ABERCROMBIE. And the ones who will pay the price of that attitude should it become more pervasive, "death to America," is not going to be us here. They are getting ready to celebrate. Come on. They are closing down the mall tomorrow. For those of you out there tuning in, they are closing down the mall tomorrow because the National Football League is getting underway. The Redskins are going to play. No traffic. People are taking days off. They are taking sick leave, whatever it is. They are closing down the mall, not because of a terrorist threat but because the Washington Redskins are going to start the National Football League and that is what we are going to concentrate on. And what do you think will be on the front page of The Washington Post on Friday morning? Whether or not the Redskins won the game. But will there be a story about two more kids getting wounded or killed over in Baghdad or Tikrit or some other godforsaken place that nobody knows anything about and cannot spell?

Let me tell you what has happened, how much we care about this supporting the troops. If I hear that one more time from these hypocrites. The toughest thing we have ever done since 9/11, which is coming up in a couple of days, the biggest sacrifice we ever made is not the inconvenience of taking off your shoes walking through a testing device at the airport, we postponed the Super Bowl for 1 week. That is the big sacrifice. We are supposedly in a total war. The President tells me that I am in a war, a total war, over maybe 10 years and we are going to go and we are going to conduct this war with every fiber that we have. We are not doing anything of the kind. We are watching the football game on television.

When I see those guys out on the field, I see there is a kid from Ohio State, he cannot decide whether he wants to go to class or not. He does not know whether it is worth it. I do not blame him. They are marketing him over there. They are making a million dollars out of him. We are worried about whether some professional basketball player took advantage of a young woman and we are going to spend more money and time on that. They are all pretty healthy, it looks to me. Why are they not in uniform over there? Why do we not have a draft if we really

mean that this is a war against terror and this is something that we have to fight right through to the end with all the resources of the United States?

That is what I cannot bear. I cannot bear the idea that we sit here, 435 of us that have been designated on the trust and faith of our constituents to try and make good judgments. We do not have a referendum in here in this country. This is not something where we just run out and take a vote on the fashion of the moment. We are supposed to be trying to use what brains that God gave us and what judgment we have been able to accrue over the experiences of our lifetime and, based on the faith and trust of our constituents, render responsible policies and obligations for this country. What I am saying is that these young men and women have volunteered for the armed services of the United States not because we expect them to throw their lives away on the political fashion of the moment, but because we expect to be able to provide them with the necessities of being able to carry through on the strategic interests of this Nation.

I say that the strategic interests of this Nation now requires us to have an exit plan out of Iraq and to turn the question of Iraq and its governance over to the Iraqis as soon as possible so that they can make the necessary arrangements with the United Nations, of which we are a part, in order to aid and assist them.

Mr. INSLEE. If the gentleman will yield, these are really hard discussions because we have been saying this now for months in the evenings with this group, that this effort needs to have more international support. We need to give our troops enough support so that they indeed can be secure. Since we last said that and then we went back to our districts for August, 40 more of our proud troops have died in Iraq, with the administration ignoring the obvious need to internationalize this effort. Over 100 people have been seriously injured, over 1,000 in the Iraq war, people coming back without limbs. But this administration cannot pay enough attention to common sense to put down their hubris and their arrogance for 10 minutes to come up with a policy that will keep our troops safe. The thing that is galling about it, and you do not have to be a Rhodes scholar and spend 40 hours a week thinking about foreign policy to know this.

Yesterday I went out, the fellow was working on a cable wire in front of our house, it was a hot day, it has been really hot in August in Seattle. I just went out and gave him a pop and we started talking. He says, "I'm not an international expert. I can't figure out why George Bush wants just our kids to die in Iraq. I just can't figure that out. That doesn't make any sense to me."

I think when a cable guy on Holly Street in Bainbridge Island has that recognition, this administration ought to change its attitude to this effort, not want to be a bring-it-on mentality but an attitude of working with the international community. There is another thing I want to report to you about what people out on the street know about this issue. They know that we still have to get to the bottom of why the American people were not told the straight scoop before this war started. That is why we are cosponsors of a bill to have a bipartisan commission to get to the bottom of why Americans were deluded about the nature of the security threat in Iraq.

I am not the only one who feels this. Two weeks ago in Shoreline, Washington, we just published a little notice, we were going to have a little meeting about Iraq intelligence. We were going to have it at noon on a Thursday on an 80-degree day in Seattle. We booked a room for 200 people. We had indications more were going to show up. We booked a room for 400, then for 600. We had 1,100 people show up at noon in Shoreline, Washington, who were raving angry about why this administration did not tell America the truth about Iraq before they got us into this war. They had one request and demand of the U.S. Congress: Do a bipartisan commission to get to the bottom of what happened here.

Let me tell you why this is important, and we had pretty good people talking about this. Ambassador Joe Wilson, the guy who blew the whistle on the administration's fraudulent use of the claim about uranium from

Africa, he flew all the way from D.C.; retired Admiral Bill Center, distinguished Navy career, who talked about the fact that he certainly did not see the threat that the administration was saying existed; Brewster Denny of the University of Washington School of Public Policy. They agreed with everybody in the room who recognized that if we are going to internationalize this effort in Iraq, you cannot do that successfully unless we have a full accounting about who was responsible about selling the American people and the world a bill of goods about what happened in Iraq. And 1,100 people recognized that in Shoreline, Washington.

This measure of accountability that we need is necessary to clear the decks to get the type of alliance we need in the international community that maybe, just maybe, the administration is starting to finally figure out, way, way late. We hope we are going to have some support on the other side of the aisle about going forward to get to the bottom of this in a bipartisan fashion.

Mr. ABERCROMBIE. If we cannot get to the bottom of it in a bipartisan fashion, there is one way for people to make that clear and that is in the voting booth. If we cannot pass it in here, you are going to have to get the people in here who are willing to pass it.

Mr. HOEFFEL. Let me thank the gentleman from Washington for joining us and for his comments. And, the first time with Iraq Watch, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. Strickland).

Mr. STRICKLAND. I want to thank the gentleman. I sat here in my heart cheerleading as the gentleman from Hawaii (Mr. Abercrombie) was talking with us. Because the fact is we sit here in this Chamber, in the safety and security of this Chamber, and as we sit here and make decisions, young Americans are in danger. Every day I get up and I turn on the TV and usually the first thing I hear is that we have lost another American soldier or two American soldiers in Iraq. It does anger me. Because I think we have been irresponsible in the course we have taken, but we are continuing to accept in almost a casual way the fact that young Americans are being killed on a daily basis.

I got a letter from a young soldier from Baghdad just the other day. In the letter, this young soldier said, I am so proud of the Army and we are working so hard to do the right thing over here. But, you know, my fellow soldiers are appalled at the President's bring-them-on rhetoric.

The fact is this is a serious situation we find ourselves in. We all have different ideas, I guess, about how we should deal with this. But I think we should either put sufficient numbers of troops in there to provide a high level of security or we should go to the United Nations and we should seek their support and

even cede some control over the decision-making, or we should bring our troops home, because just tolerating daily deaths is intolerable. I think it is intolerable for the American people, but it should be intolerable for this President and for those of us who serve in this House of Representatives. These young Americans are willing to fight and die for the benefit of this country, but they are not willing, I believe, to give their lives for purposes that are less than central, absolutely central to what is essential for this country's well-being.

We need to rethink what we are doing. The President and this Congress needs to come together and to look at the seriousness of this situation and to change our course here.

Mr. ABERCROMBIE. The difficulty I think here is that there has been a tendency, at least to this point, and I detect a change coming here, too, the tendency has been, if not the outright policy, is equate support for the troops with the political policies of those who have sent them over there. That to me is an abomination of the idea of patriotism. Serving as I do on the Committee on Armed Services, I am only too well aware of the caliber of the fighting man and woman in the United States Armed Forces today. The capacity that they have to carry

out their mission is extraordinary. The morale that they do have associated with their own perception of what they are capable of, believe me, could not be higher.

The question is, are we up to the task? Are the politicians up to the task of representing that same kind of competency and professionalism, if you will, in providing what that mission should be?

Mr. STRICKLAND. That is right. But we all know that talk is cheap. And the fact is that there are a lot of lofty words spoken in this Chamber, but we have a serious problem. There are moms and dads and sweethearts and husbands and wives, children, whose loved ones at this very moment are serving under the most difficult circumstances. They cannot be adequately protected. They are sitting ducks. We got excited in this town when there was a sniper loose and it took us weeks to identify that person, to find out who it was. Now there may be a sniper loose in the State of West Virginia and we are concerned about that. Baghdad is full of such snipers. Our soldiers are in fixed positions and they are being killed on a daily basis.

I asked Ambassador Bremer, what are we going to do? What is the plan? How are we going to keep these deaths from occurring? The answer I got is that we probably are going to have to accept the fact that there are likely to be continuing casualties.

That is not acceptable. We have got a responsibility to take a different course of action.

Mr. DELAHUNT. I know we are winding down, but before we do, I think we would be remiss if we did not note the deteriorating situation in Afghanistan. In the future, I would hope we would include Afghanistan, because those same brave young men and women are in Afghanistan. Two stories today, Associated Press. The Taliban are no longer on the run and have teamed up with al Qaeda once again, according to officials and former Taliban, who say the religious militia has reorganized and strengthened since their defeat at the hands of the U.S.-led coalition nearly 2 years ago.

And now the administration is talking about doubling the aid from \$900 million to almost \$2 billion. I daresay that will be insufficient, but remember this, it is costing us \$11 billion a year to maintain a military presence in Afghanistan.

Mr. HOEFFEL. I thank my colleagues for being part of this tonight. Iraq Watch will be back next Tuesday night.