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Iraq Watch The President's Request for \$87 Billion September 9, 2003

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. King of Iowa). 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, we come to the floor again this evening as part of the Iraq Watch. For the last 2 months or so, four of us have been coming here the first evening that the House is in session each week to talk about Iraq, to talk about the policies that we think are flawed, to suggest new policies that the Nation might pursue, to ask questions about our policies and involvement in Iraq that we believe the American people need to know about and that Congress needs to know about.

The four of us who have done this week after week include the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. Delahunt), the gentleman from Hawaii (Mr. Abercrombie), and the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. Emanuel). We have been joined each week by several others, and we look forward to the discussion this evening and to continuing this each week until our involvement in Iraq has been clarified and stabilized and until we get answers to some of the questions that we think Congress is entitled to and the American people are entitled to.

Mr. Speaker, this past week the President has announced his budget request for our occupation in Iraq for next year totaling \$87 billion, a much higher figure than anticipated, on top of the \$79 billion appropriated by Congress just this past April for the 2003 budget year. This requested \$87 billion for 2004 would make our national investment over about a year-and-a-half period of time \$166 billion, and every Member of Congress wants to make sure that we do right by the brave soldiers that are stationed in Iraq today. Every Member of Congress is determined to do right by the troops in the field, to make sure they get the support that they need, the resources they need, the equipment, the reinforcements, the supplies, everything they need to fulfill their mission as safely as possible.

So the debate that Congress will have over the next 2 or 3 weeks regarding the President's request for \$87 billion will not be about supporting the troops in the field, because we all want to do that; and we are all prepared to do that. What we will ask questions about is the President's vision for Iraq. He wants \$87 billion. I believe Congress is entitled to the benefit of his thinking to know what he plans and what his administration plans to accomplish in Iraq and how he is going to do it.

We owe those questions and deserve those answers, not just to Congress, but to the American people. It is their tax dollars being spent. It is their sons and daughters who are fighting in Iraq; and in a very tragic sense, their sons and daughters who are dying in Iraq, and this Congress needs to know some of the answers.

Fundamentally, we need to know what the plan is. We need to know what the exit strategy is. How long will we be in Iraq? What are we trying to achieve? How will we know when we have achieved it? What standards can we set for ourselves? What are we trying to accomplish? What yardsticks can we use to determine whether or not we are succeeding, whether or not more troops will be needed, whether or not more money will be needed down the road?

So I would suggest four areas before I turn to the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. Delahunt). Let me suggest four areas that I would like to see the President give information to the Congress.

The first would be regarding the military operations and occupation in Iraq, how long does the President believe that our troops will be needed, how much money will be needed, not just next year but in the foreseeable future to support those troops and how many more troops will be needed to fulfill the mission. I should point out that the civilian leadership of the Pentagon last spring estimated by this time, by September of 2003, we would only need 40,000 American troops in Iraq. Right now we have 130,000 American troops in Iraq; and clearly, that is not enough. So we need a better plan. We need to know how many troops, how long will they be here, and how much will it cost to support them.

Secondly, we need to ask the same questions and get the same answers about the reconstruction of Iraq. How long will it take to get the lights back on? How long will it take to get clean water to the villages and the cities of Iraq? How much will it cost America to finance the reconstruction? When can we anticipate Iraqi oil revenues coming on line to pay for Iraq's reconstruction itself? How many more personnel from America will be needed, whether it is architects or engineers or teachers or government experts or lawyers? How many more personnel will be needed to move the reconstruction and the new governance forward?

Thirdly, how quickly can we internationalize the operation? I think this is a key to our success in Iraq. We have got to bring forward our allies, United Nations, other international organizations to help pay for the reconstruction and to provide their resources and assets and expertise for the reconstruction, as well as for the military security challenges. Many of us have thought that the U.N. should have been brought in months ago to be put in charge of the reconstruction. Many of us felt that NATO should have been brought in months ago to be responsible for security, but we need to know what the President's plan is, how does he foresee the internationalizing of Iraq, if he foresees that at all. This is something that we need to know.

Finally, the fourth point is, when will Iraqis be back in charge of Iraq? Clearly, America cannot run Iraq into the indefinite future. It has been said since we almost unilaterally won the military victory that we now own Iraq, Iraq is ours. I am not sure we want that to be our approach to this. We cannot own, run, dominate, occupy a foreign country for long. That is not what America is about. We will fight for freedom, we will fight to liberate, we will fight to disarm murderous tyrants. We will do many good things to help people around the world, both to help people around the world and to protect our own national interests; but occupying a foreign country for a long period of time is not what this country is all about.

So how will we get Iraqis back in charge? What do we need to do to get them back in charge? What kind of training do they need? How can they support a democratic government when they do not have a history of democracy?

What do we need to do to build the institutions of liberty to help them support a democracy? What do we need to do to establish a free press in Iraq, the rights of free speech, the traditions of free speech? How do we make a corruption-free and open court system in Iraq? How do we help them write a constitution? How do we get all segments of Iraq to participate in a representative government, a pluralistic government, and a democratic government? How long will it take, how do we do it, what yardsticks can we use to measure our progress?

Mr. Speaker, these are the questions I believe that Congress needs to ask of the President. These are the questions I hope he will be eager to answer. He wants \$87 billion. It is a great deal of money. We want to do right by our American troops. We want to do right by our commitment to freedom and liberty around the world. But doing right requires us to know what we are doing and to do right by the American taxpayer as well. And so we will be putting these questions forward, and I hope that we will be getting prompt and full and complete answers from the administration.

Mr. Speaker, at this point let me turn to my good friend, the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. Delahunt), who has been a leader in the Iraq Watch and a leader on the Committee on International Relations and welcome him to this discussion. We look forward to his comments.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend and colleague, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. Hoeffel), who has led this particular conversation for some many weeks now.

My memory is that last week there were reports in many of the leading newspapers in this country that the President would come forward with a supplemental budget in the neighborhood of some \$80 billion; and this past Sunday, the American people and Members of Congress learned for the first time that that budget request would be for some \$87 billion. That is an astounding figure.

Clearly, we are on the verge of adding to a deficit that was estimated for the fiscal year of 2004 to be some \$480 billion. The way we are heading, it is now in excess, with this request, of some \$540 billion. That is disturbing, the long-term implications for what we have to look forward to in terms of an economic recovery. \$87 billion, I think it is interesting to note, exceeds the following that were items in the President's budget.

This \$87 billion we have discussed here is a supplemental budget. This is in addition to the \$79 billion that this Congress approved, it seems like just a short time ago, though it was several months ago. The entire request for the year for homeland security was \$41 billion. This supplemental request is double that amount. More than double.

Health and Human Services, \$66.2 billion. And that \$66.2 billion, we should note, includes \$27 billion for the National Institutes of Health, which is so critical to advancing discoveries for such scourges as cancer, heart disease, et cetera, et cetera.

This \$87 billion supplemental request exceeds the total amount allocated or budgeted for the Department of Education. The Department of Education budget was some \$53 billion.

It is almost three times the amount that has been appropriated for the State Department in foreign aid. That figure is some \$27 billion.

For highway and road construction in the United States, \$30 billion.

The only aspect of the President's budget that this particular supplemental request does not surpass are the proposed tax cuts of some \$107 billion.

This says to me, and I know it says it to my friend as well, that the costs were vastly underestimated; and now we face a difficult moment in our economic life where this recovery, if we can call it a recovery, is certainly a jobless recovery. This past month, in August, it was reported that here in the United States an additional 93,000 jobs, American jobs, were lost. This supplemental request of \$87 billion certainly will not add to the number of jobs and the number of Americans that are employed.

Mr. HOEFFEL. If I may reclaim my time, Mr. Speaker, for just a moment, the President has recently said that he will be advocating to make the 2001 tax cuts permanent. If the gentleman will recall, that tax program was too big to fit into the 10-year budget program that the Republicans put forward, so they sunsetted most of those tax cuts. But now the President wants to make them permanent, which will lose another trillion or so of revenue over the next 10 years.

I wonder if the gentleman has ever before noticed, in his study of history, a time when America was at war, where, when we asked for sacrifices from the American people, those sacrifices were limited to the middle-income and low-income people who are receiving frozen or reduced government services and, of course, are bearing most of the cost and burden of fighting our battles in Iraq, while the wealthier Americans are actually being asked to sacrifice by getting a tax cut?

Mr. DELAHUNT. Well, Mr. Speaker, if my friend would yield for a moment, of course that is absolutely aberrational in American history. In fact, during World War II, President Roosevelt asked the American people to accept a tax increase. We are not here even suggesting that this evening. But I think what we have learned is, unfortunately, the estimates that have been put forth by the administration were absolutely inaccurate, underestimated, and represented a scenario that was totally unrealistic.

I would remind my friend that Under Secretary of Defense Wolfowitz, back in March, told Congress that, and I will quote him, "We are dealing with a country that can really refinance its own reconstruction, and relatively soon." And relatively soon.

What I find fascinating is that this Congress, on a bipartisan basis, is expressing its dismay. To quote from a story that appeared in the September 9 issue of The New York Times, and this is when representatives of the administration were appearing before a Senate committee, a prominent member of that committee, Senator McCain of Arizona, was dissatisfied with an answer from Mark Grossman, the Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs on how long it would take for more troops from other countries to arrive in Iraq under United Nations auspices: "I am not asking for precisely what day," Senator McCain said. "I am asking of a matter could you tell me years?" Mr. Grossman replied that should the Security Council resolution pass in the next few weeks, I can't imagine that it would be years. "that precision is not really satisfying," said Senator McCain."

The level of incompetence in terms of the postwar, postmajor come-back phase, I should say, of what would be required of America, American taxpayers and American military personnel, the magnitude of that incompetence can only be described as colossal; and it has cost America its sons and badly needed revenue to meet our own domestic needs. As I indicated earlier, when I was reading through the monies available for Homeland Security, for Health and Human Services, for Education, for the functioning of the State Department in foreign assistance, this supplemental budget, by itself, exceeded all of the monies allocated for those needs.

What we know now and what we should have known is that you simply cannot have tax cuts, guns, and butter too; yet here we are tonight faced with a proposal that is really a price tag. There is no plan. The questions that the gentleman posed earlier in terms of how long will our troops be required there, when will Iraqis assume control of their own destiny and divested with the power that is necessary have not been provided.

I think that the White House and the administration and the Department of Defense have to be prepared to respond to those questions. Otherwise, I cannot imagine this body and the United States Senate approving a request that would provide the White House with a blank check. It just simply will not fly.

Mr. HOEFFEL. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for his comments. Eloquent as always.

We have been joined by our colleague, the gentleman from Washington (Mr. Inslee), and we welcome him.

Mr. INSLEE. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman will yield, I am pleased to participate in this discussion.

I think a preliminary question the U.S. Congress needs to ask itself is what role we have in acting as stewards for the taxpayers' money in this regard for \$87 billion in expenditures.

It seems to me that we ought to really scrupulously evaluate how effective this administration and their team has been to date in fulfilling its warrants to the American people in regard to the Iraqi situation. It is important to know whether this administration has been so accurate, so complete, so well-planned that, frankly, Congress ought to just give the administration a blank check and let it run. So I want to spend just 2 minutes evaluating the performance in that regard.

Mr. Speaker, the administration allowed the American people to believe Saddam Hussein was behind September 11. As far as we know, according to the commission established for that purpose, that was wrong. The Bush administration led the American people to believe that Iraq was in cahoots with al Qaeda. According to information we now have, that was wrong. The administration told the American people that Iraq had literally hundreds of tons of chemical and biological companies. That may or may not be wrong, but to date appears to be. The administration told the American people that Iraq had sought to get uranium from Africa. That was wrong; in fact, fraudulent on someone's behalf. The Bush administration told the American people that troops would be welcomed with rose petals and open arms when they got to Baghdad. That turned out to be wrong.

The administration told the American people that this would be largely a self-financing operation, as the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. Delahunt) indicated. Mr. Wolfowitz said in a short period of time, the oil would flow, the dollars would grow, and the American taxpayers would not be on the hook.

This administration's record on its warrants to the American people is sadly lacking. In that context, it seems to me the U.S. Congress ought to not only ask serious, probing questions of the administration, it ought to set conditions on the expenditure of money that it may appropriate in this regard. Questions are not enough. Conditions are needed because this is a significant sum of money, \$87 billion. The entire Marshall Plan was \$100 billion. This is not a Marshall Plan, it is a partial plan because it lacks two very crucial elements.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Mr. Speaker, I call it the no plan.

Mr. INSLEE. I think it is important to be generous in the spirit of bipartisanship. I will say partial plan because it lacks two important elements.

Number one, it lacks a sincere effort to bring the international community into this effort. This administration, for reasons that are passive understanding, has had a sincere desire to be as unilateral as possible all of the way through this effort, and they have burned bridges every possible way. And now what we see to date when they finally say maybe we have to do something to rationalize this, they offer a fig leaf.

We need full international participation in this effort because Iraq is not a prize to be won, it is a burden to be shared, and both taxpayers and our military should be sharing that burden with the rest of the world rather than exclusively having the United States shoulder it. There ought to be a condition for any money that is appropriated, specifically allocated or authorized by Congress.

Second, another way that it is partial, it does not pay respect to domestic needs. The President has said that his tax cuts are a higher priority than building schools that could be built with \$87 billion. He needs to rethink that.

Third, how it is partial, and this is perhaps long term for our children's benefit, the thing it lacks is it simply is not paying for this obligation. It seeks to borrow from our children money to pay for this operation. It borrows from the Social Security to pay for this operation. We have heard about the lockbox, and it is not a lockbox. It is pulling in Social Security to pay for this obligation.

Why does the President not want to pay for this? We should pay for it. Winston Churchill said all I have to offer is blood, sweat, toil and tears. This administration says while we have a war overseas, it will be balloons and fruit and candy back home with tax cuts, and now they want to continue to pass tax cuts, largely going to wealthy members of our society.

If this is so important to American security, the President ought to be bellying up to the bar and asking Americans to recognize this not go forward with the tax cuts. That is an obligation that he ought to take and he ought to ask Americans to share in that, and he ought to be sincere in it and not have this let us be happy and fight a war at the same time. It is not the way the greatest generation did it in World War II or after World War II, and we ought to rise to that same obligation, to the world, and to our prosperity.

Mr. HOEFFEL. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the comments from the gentleman from Washington (Mr. Inslee). We have also been joined by the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. Strickland). I look forward to your comments.

Mr. STRICKLAND. Mr. Speaker, it is good to be here this evening. I am here tonight to say something that for me is kind of difficult to say. I believe the President has deceived us, that he has distorted the truth, and that he has engaged in false claims which has taken us into a war which is daily claiming the lives of our soldiers. The President and his administration told

us that there was a connection between what happened on September 11, 2001, and Iraq, and thus far we have found no substantive evidence that such a connection existed.

The President told us that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction and that it was necessary for us to engage in a preemptive attack because of an imminent attack from Iraq, and thus far no such weapons have been found.

Vice President Cheney said we would be welcomed as liberators, the people would consider us their friends; and yet the truth is that on a daily basis, young Americans are losing their lives and many more are being horribly maimed and injured, disfigured in Iraq.

The administration told us this would not cost us a lot of money because Iraq had lots of oil and as already been mentioned in March, Deputy Defense Secretary Wolfowitz told the House subcommittee that Iraq could generate \$50 billion to \$100 billion of oil revenue over the next to 2 to 3 years. He said we are dealing with a country that can finance its own reconstruction and relatively soon, and yet the President in total has requested over \$150 billion of our tax dollars to pay for our adventure in Iraq.

The President said recently that we must provide every benefit to our soldiers and protect them in any way possible, and yet tonight as we stand here on this floor in the safety of this great hall, young Americans are in Iraq wearing vests that do not have the capacity to stop bullets. They are wearing cheap vests because we have not spent the money necessary to get the highest quality protective vests for our soldiers.

Moms and dads are asking me questions. Wives and sweethearts are asking me questions, questions that I cannot answer because this administration is unwilling to come forth and tell us what the plan is, how long they are going to be there. The President recently asked for \$87 billion, American tax dollars, and we have heard a lot about that over the past few days on radio and television, but the truth is it is more than \$87 billion because he asked for billions earlier. It is over \$150 billion. But this \$87 billion is three times the amount we are spending on homeland security, three times more than we are spending to keep our country safe. It is more than we are spending on education and homeland security combined.

In this Congress we are underfunding the No Child Left Behind bill by \$8 billion. We are underfunding veterans health care by \$1.8 billion. The President is trying to impose additional costs on our veterans. He is asking our veterans to pay \$15 a prescription, up from \$7 a prescription. He is wanting to impose a \$250 annual enrollment fee so that many of our veterans can participate in the VA health care system.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. King of Iowa). The Chair would remind all Members to refrain from improper references to the President, such as accusing him of deception.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman would yield, let me say that \$1.8 billion underfunded does not include the fact that this administration, within the past year, has denied access to health care benefits that this Congress in 1996 mandated for all veterans.

Now we have a situation where the administration is encouraging no outreach, do not tell. They have a do-not-tell policy.

Mr. STRICKLAND. They have a gag order. They have a gag order. They have instructed their doctors and social workers and nurses who work in our VA hospitals, they have told them they cannot participate in community health fairs.

They cannot send out newsletters informing our veterans of the services they are entitled to receive. They cannot make public service announcements informing the veterans of what this Congress has provided them under the law.

We are willing to spend money in Iraq but we are not willing to take care of our veterans. In my judgment it is shameful what we are doing to our veterans.

Then they decided that they were going to create a new category of veteran. We call them Priority 8 veterans. You can make as little as \$25,000 and this administration considers you high income. And they say you cannot enroll in VA health care. You can be a combat decorated veteran and be excluded.

Mr. DELAHUNT. I think that is so important to repeat. And we should say it slowly so that those in the viewing audience hear it clearly. And I would challenge any member of this branch to come forward and rebut it. If you earn over \$25,000 and are a combat veteran, and you are described as a Priority 8 veteran, and understand there are hundreds of thousands that fall within that classification, you cannot enroll in a veterans health care program in this country. That is more than shameful; it is unconscionable.

We sent these young and women to war, and when they come back, we dishonor them, we disrespect them.

Mr. STRICKLAND. And we are talking about if we had an additional \$1.8 billion, we could include those veterans. We are quibbling over \$1.8 billion when we are being asked to approve \$87 billion for Iraq. It is beyond belief.

Mr. INSLEE. Is it a fair statement that under the policies of this administration that they have advocated as far as their budget that the veterans system that was in existence when these soldiers and sailors went to Iraq, when they come back from their extended tours, which are now being extended to the surprise of many, will come back to a veterans system that is less beneficial and less protective than when they left?

Mr. STRICKLAND. Absolutely.

Mr. Speaker, I got a letter from a young West Point graduate. He graduated from West Point just literally a few months ago. He is in Baghdad tonight. He wrote me about 2 months ago. He said, Congressman, they are issuing two kinds of vests here, one is capable of stopping bullets, the other is only capable of stopping fragments. And my men are wondering why they have the cheap vests.

We took months to build up to the engagement in this conflict. We had plenty of time to make sure that every need that our soldiers may face in terms of equipment was available for them. It disturbs me that there may be young Americans tonight whose lives are unnecessarily in danger because this government has not provided them with the best possible protection.

That really disturbs me. It ought to disturb everyone who serves in this Chamber, everyone who serves in the Senate and certainly it ought to disturb the President.

Mr. INSLEE. It would disturb anyone who has gone to Bethesda Naval Hospital, as I have, and have talked to the Marines who have lost limbs and who have had crushing injuries of lifetime disability, to think that they are going to have less effective and comprehensive medical care than existed before they started this battle. That is not what they ought to be fighting for. It also seems to me to be appropriate for this administration to throw overboard its predilection for unilateralism, this desire to go it alone, this kind of macho policy of not allowing anyone else to be an ally with you, to bring other people involved in this effort, not just American GIs and Marines. Because the success of this mission depends on winning the respect of the Iraqi people, and winning the respect of the Iraqi people for whatever new government is formed is going to be more enhanced if we get more people from around the community internationally to be involved in this effort additionally sharing this burden.

I may add, too, the injuries are truly severe. We cry and we pray over those who have not come home, but we have got a very high proportion of very severe injuries from this, in part because of the magnificent trauma care that we have now developed, at least at the scene of the battle. These kids deserve a veterans plan that is going to treat them as well as their fathers and their grandfathers were treated and better.

That is not happening right now and is a symptom of this administration's addiction to these tax cuts on an altar that is higher than any other human value, including veterans health care, and it is wrong. During this debate about this \$87 billion, we should make sure that this issue is addressed, too, and not swept under the rug.

Mr. DELAHUNT. I cannot agree more. There has to be, as a precondition, serious consideration of this supplemental budget request for \$87 billion and an honest and sincere effort to restore the \$1.8 billion, \$2

billion, whatever that number be, to provide those veterans the kind of services that they are entitled to and that they defended this country so bravely to secure for future veterans.

While we are talking for a moment about the military, it was the Congressional Budget Office that identified a looming problem. In March, we will have to start withdrawing most of our troops in Iraq if we want to maintain an acceptable level of military readiness. That is on the horizon. As the gentleman from Washington indicates, I do not see other nations rushing to provide a coalition, a genuine coalition that will provide the kind of security and stability that is necessary for the reconstruction of Iraq. I am sure many in the audience and those of you here tonight have noted in the most recent edition of Time magazine on the cover, Are We Stretched Too Thin? I daresay if you listen to General Schwarzkopf, if you listen to our military leaders who will speak in private, they will say we are stretched very, very, very thin. And here we are, contemporaneously with addressing this issue, we are now in the process of discussions that we cannot predict how they will go relative to the threat of a nuclear North Korea.

Some statements have been made by members of this administration that the military option has not been removed from the table. What are we talking about?

Mr. INSLEE. If the gentleman will yield, I think it is very important that the gentleman points out about the difficulty of perhaps having to bring folks home because we are stretched thin beginning in March, and the reason that is important is it points out a fundamental truth that the administration has refused to share with the American people. They have not leveled with the American people on one fundamental truth, and that is the first 60 or \$65 billion that was allocated was just a down payment. This second \$87 billion is a second of many installments. We have already heard talk about another \$30 billion to \$60 billion following this one. This could lead to a significant restructuring of the entire U.S. military by increasing the number of troops to deal with this rotational need of our military.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Let me ask the gentleman, does this mean that at some point in the future, if we continue to have a foreign policy that creates these significant needs for military personnel, that some day on the floor of this House we will be debating the necessity for a draft?

Mr. STRICKLAND. I think so.

Mr. INSLEE. That is the \$64,000 question.

Mr. DELAHUNT. It is time to ask these kinds of questions.

Mr. INSLEE. The gentleman points out something that I think is important and that is that the President needs to level with the American people about the real cost of this.

Now, right now we have volunteers suffering the real cost of this war with loss of life and limb; but our children have a real cost they are enduring too, a Federal deficit that has gone over \$500 billion this year with this additional \$87 billion, the highest deficit in American history; and that is a real cost that the President, if he wants to show real leadership, would level with the American people about and say that we need to pay for, rather than hiding the cost and playing a fiscal shell game and putting that on our children.

The only way to level with the American people is for him to throw aside at least some of the tax cuts, at least the additional tax cuts that he wants to give to the wealthiest folks in this country. If he believes the security interests of the United States demands that, then honesty to our children demands that and honesty about the true cost of war.

That is why I believe when this debate starts, it is going to be very important for the U.S. Congress to condition any funds that are appropriated on making sure that it is paid for by us and not shucked off on the backs of our children as further deficit spending, as this administration has been wont to do, as it is necessary to condition this money on something that is going to be a requirement for success, and that is to get the rest of the world involved in this effort. It is the only way to win the Iraqis' respect for our ultimate efforts.

Mr. HOEFFEL. The gentleman has made several very good points, and he has been talking about the notion of whether or not the President is leveling with the American people.

I would like to get back to an earlier discussion. A suggestion was made by one of us this evening that the President was deceitful and we were admonished by the Chair that was not appropriate language. None of us are here to challenge the Chair. We are here to ask for the truth and ask questions about our policies in Iraq.

I would like to review the bidding a little, to set this question in some context, whether or not the President has been deceitful.

The President and his top advisers in the fall of 2002 said with complete certainty that Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction, was developing more weapons of mass destruction, was developing a chemical weapons of mass destruction program, a biological weapons of mass destruction program, and was probably moving forward to try to restart a nuclear weapons of mass destruction program, long before the State of the Union address this past January. I am speaking now of September 2002.

In private briefings many of us received at the White House the same representations were made: complete certainty that the weapons of mass destruction program in Iraq was in full bloom and full speed ahead with, as I think the gentleman said, hundreds of tons of these weapons in the possession of Saddam Hussein, more on the way.

The briefing I attended with maybe 15 of our colleagues was led by George Tenet and Condoleezza Rice in the Roosevelt Room of the White House. In their presentations and in their answers to questions from Members of Congress, a bipartisan group of us, complete certainty was expressed. At one point, Mr. Tenet, being

asked would you rate on a scale of zero to 10 your certainty about the presence of these weapons in Iraq, he said 10.

Mr. STRICKLAND. Pretty certain.

Mr. HOEFFEL. It is not just that we have not found those weapons. Maybe they are there and hidden away, but we sure have not found them yet. It is not just we have not found them. It has now come to light that the White House was being given classified information by the intelligence agencies last fall that was telling the White House that there was great uncertainty about the state of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction program.

These then-classified documents, now available in part because the White House declassified one to try to prove its case, and the other because it is now available for us to read at the Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence office, the Defense Intelligence Agency report of September 2002 and the National Intelligence Estimate of October 2002 are replete with expressions of doubt, uncertainty. I remember the phrase "no credible evidence" that Hussein had an ongoing chemical weapons program.

None of those doubts were reported to the American people or to Congress, none of that uncertainty was expressed; and it is my belief that the President exaggerated the threat of weapons of mass destruction in the fall of 2002, in the buildup to the war, in order to secure public support and congressional support for an authorization of war.

I will yield when I have unloaded my frustrations, which will be in just a moment.

It is my belief that the President misled Congress, and it is my understanding from the documents that I have since read that are now available to us that were not available to us in the fall of 2002 that the White House was well instructed about the doubts and the uncertainty from the CIA, the FBI, and the rest of the intelligence agencies.

Now, if it is objectionable to say that on the floor of the House, if the Republican leadership does not want to hear that on the floor of the House, bring it on. Let us bring it on right here, because this is the nub of the argument. This is what we are here to ask about.

I would be happy to yield to my friend.

Mr. STRICKLAND. The American people really do not care what word we use, but they understand what has happened. They listened to the President go on TV and address the national audience. They heard his references to a connection between al Qaeda and Iraq and September 11. They heard everything that was said about weapons of mass destruction.

We do not have to pick a particular word. The American people understand that the situation that was described for them was an unreal situation, and the result is this: we have got thousands of our troops in Iraq tonight. They are inadequately protected. We are not providing them the best protection possible. We are not. And I challenge anyone in this administration to challenge that statement, to tell me that they have got the best vests that we can buy, to tell me that they are as protected as they possibly can be. I do not believe it, based on what I have been told and I think what the facts show.

So I do not want to quibble about what words we may use, but my friend has been very accurate. The gentleman has laid out the case as it unfolded.

Now we are being told, well, we are there, so we might as well just, oh, get on board and get this over with. I think it is appropriate for us to ask whether or not those who are providing leadership are worthy of our confidence. Are they competent people? Have they told the truth? Can we trust them to make further decisions about what is happening in Iraq? Those are the questions that must be answered.

Mr. DELAHUNT. I think it is important that we stress that this is not just Democrats that are posing these questions. This past week on, I think it was the "CBS Early Show," someone who understands combat, someone who was in war and who is a decorated veteran of the Vietnam conflict, CHUCK HAGEL, Republican from Nebraska, said this: "The administration has done a miserable job of planning the post-Saddam Iraq."

The administration has done a miserable job of planning the post-Saddam Iraq. That is Senator Hagel. We all know Senator Hagel. Everybody in Congress respects and acknowledges his integrity, but he was right too. Maybe we failed in our responsibility collectively. I am talking about the House as well as the other branch. Because he pointed out that we allowed the administration to treat us like a nuisance. We did not ask the questions. Some of us did. But no, in the heat and in the vast amount of publicity that was attendant to the

President and Vice President CHENEY and Under Secretary Wolfowitz's natural access to the media, people did not ask the tough questions. Well, not this time.

Mr. STRICKLAND. That is right.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Not this time. We want a plan, and we want all of the answers.

I can remember Secretary Feith coming in front of the Committee on International Relations. I asked him, give me just an idea of the costs to rebuild Iraq. He said, I do not have any answers.

Mr. ABERCROMBIE. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman will yield on that point, precisely on that question, we need an answer as to whether or not reports today in the Los Angeles Times are correct that the \$87 billion figure is some \$55 billion short of what the administration in anonymous leaks are indicating is actually needed, and that the \$87 billion is to take us up until the election; and then somehow, we are to magically find \$55 billion from supposed allies. The exact quote, as a matter of fact, is that according to the Los Angeles Times, they said they would "pressure other countries to come up with the additional funds needed to restore security in Iraq and repair its ravaged infrastructure." And I think everything that has been said tonight is indicative of the proposition that has just been made over these past few minutes that before we vote on this \$87 billion, we have to ask the question: Is this actually the number that you are using, even internally?

Mr. DELAHUNT. And does that include the \$2 billion necessary for veterans health care benefits.

Mr. ABERCROMBIE. And that is why we have to have this money authorized. That is why we have to have hearings in the Committee on Armed Services, the authorization committee. This is not just a supplemental bill to be taken to the Committee on Appropriations; this Congress needs to authorize the money that is involved in reconstruction and security in Iraq, or we are failing in our congressional duties.

Mr. HOEFFEL. Mr. Speaker, would the gentleman explain that for the viewers? Would the gentleman explain the point he is making about the difference between authorization and appropriation?

Mr. ABERCROMBIE. Very quickly, yes. Good point. Just as it is in our State legislatures, we have to authorize, that is to say, a committee must authorize the expenditure of money before it can be appropriated. The subject matter committee, in this instance the Committee on Armed Services, must take up the question: Will we authorize the expenditure of funds? The Committee on Appropriations may, if they have an authorization, appropriate up to or, in some instances, even exceed the amount of money that is there, if they can gain the approval of the legislature; but that is the object, to have a hearing as to what, in fact, should be done. That is to say what is the policy, and then attach a money figure to it.

What we are doing is saying we are going to put money out there and then figure out a policy afterwards. What I am saying and I think all of us are saying tonight is, let us get the policy down first, and then figure out what it costs and then determine whether there is a cost-benefit ratio to that policy.

Mr. INSLEE. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman will yield, I think there is an additional thing we need in addition to the sage comments of the gentleman from Hawaii (Mr. Abercrombie); we need to stop the administration from stealing from the Social Security trust fund to pay for this war, and that is what they are telling us they want to do. They want to take \$87 billion out of the Social Security trust fund to pay for this war. And the reason they want to do it is that they refuse to let go of their goal of continuing further tax cuts for the wealthiest folks in this country, and that is morally, ethically wrong to our children. And this Congress has an obligation to our kids to stop it right here during this supplemental, and I trust that we are making an effort to do that.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Mr. Speaker, if I could make a final concluding remark, and then I will then defer to the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. Hoeffel). There was a report today, or rather Monday, in The Washington Post that the Secretary of Defense, Mr. Rumsfeld, when he was concluding his 4-day trip to Iraq and Afghanistan, complained that critics of the Bush administration's Iraq policy are encouraging terrorists and complicating the war on terrorism. Give me a break.

Mr. STRICKLAND. Can I respond to that, please?

Mr. DELAHUNT. Yes. Give me a break. We are going to ask the question.

Mr. STRICKLAND. I hope the Secretary never says that in my presence, because if he does, I am going to have to challenge him. None of us, none of us condone terrorism. In fact, we are here because we are concerned that this administration is not adequately waging the war on terrorism. "Osama bin Forgotten" is out there somewhere planning the next attack on this country. The President said he can run, but he cannot hide. Well, he ran and he has hidden, and he is planning the next attack. And for the Secretary to say such a thing outside the country, outside the country I think is grossly unfair and I think the Secretary owes this Congress and each of us who have a responsibility under the Constitution to represent our constituents and to speak our mind as we believe the truth to be, he has no right to make such an accusation against any of us.

Mr. INSLEE. Mr. Speaker, if I may dovetail on your disenchantment with the total irresponsible comments of the Secretary. He said there was al Qaeda in Iraq before our attack on Iraq, and the evidence would suggest that was not the case. But as a result, following his efforts and his strategy, they are in Iraq and Iraq indeed has been turned into a potential breeding ground for terrorism. That is the kind of policy we do not want to see continued. This is the kind of mistake we do not want to see this administration make again.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. King of Iowa). As a general reminder, the Chair would like to reiterate that as stated in section 370 of the House Rules and Manual, suggesting mendacity on the part of the President is not in order, even by innuendo. As such, the Chair would reiterate that accusations of intentional deception are not in order.

Furthermore, the Chair will remind Members that it is not in order to quote Senators' remarks spoken in the media.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Hawaii (Mr. Abercrombie) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. ABERCROMBIE. Mr. Speaker, I do not intend to take the 5 minutes. I would like to defer to the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. Hoeffel) for such concluding remarks as he might like to make.

Mr. HOEFFEL. Mr. Speaker, I thank the Chair, and I thank the gentleman for his cooperation. I would like to thank the gentlemen that joined in the discussion this evening. We will be back next week, and the Iraq Watch will continue to ask questions about our policies in Iraq. We need to discuss some legislative proposals such as the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. Emanuel) has made, his American Parity Act, which would require the spending of equivalent dollars on our American domestic needs for each dollar spent on domestic needs in Iraq. If we are going to spend \$10 billion on housing in Iraq, we want to do the same in America. If we are going to spend money on water systems or infrastructure improvements in Iraq, we are suggesting we do the same in America.

That legislation deserves consideration during our next weekly discussion. We will ask more questions about the administration's policies. We hope we will get answers. I think it is a consensus view of all of us that we need to know what the plan is in Iraq. And we need to know what our exit strategy is in Iraq before this Congress will be comfortable in appropriating another \$87 billion. We need to know what our strategy is, what conditions we are trying to achieve, what yardsticks we can use to measure our progress, how we can internationalize the situation in Iraq, how we can get Iraqis back in charge of Iraq because that must be the ultimate goal for all of us.