

IRAQ ONE YEAR ANNIVERSARY
Congressman John Lewis
March 18, 2004

Mr. Speaker,

This Friday marks the one-year anniversary of the invasion of Iraq. Over ten thousand Iraqi soldiers are dead. Thousands of Iraqi civilians are dead. Nearly six hundred Americans – six hundred of our sons and daughters – are dead. Thousands more have been wounded – physically and emotionally – their lives forever changed.

But the dead and the wounded are not the only casualties of President Bush's decision to invade Iraq. Something else has died in those desert sands. Something else has been lost.

Truth. Honesty. Integrity.

For over a year, the American people have been deceived by the words of the President and his Administration. Officials at every level have misled the people that they were elected to serve.

We asked for truth, and President Bush told us that "Iraq sought significant quantities of uranium from Africa."

We asked for truth, and Vice President Cheney repeatedly warned us of close ties between Al Qaeda and Iraq.

We asked for truth, and Secretary of State Colin Powell told the United Nations that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction.

We asked for truth, and President Bush warned us that Iraq had planes that could fly weapons of mass destruction to our shores.

We asked for truth, and they told us that our troops would be greeted as liberators – that Iraqi oil would pay to rebuild Iraq.

The falsehoods go on and on. I don't know whether the Administration cannot stop – or will not stop. I only know that they do not stop.

Just last Sunday, National Security Advisor Condoleeza Rice told the American people that “Iraq was the most dangerous regime in the world.”

My Colleagues, this administration will never be able to justify the war on Iraq – because we cannot believe a word they say. They have never been honest about why we went to war. Just ask former Treasury Secretary Paul O'Neil.

And it's not just Iraq, it's almost every issue – every comment – every deed. We cannot believe a word they say.

The Bush Administration proposed a \$550 billion Medicare Prescription Drug bill – and told us it cost \$400 billion.

They cut down trees on public land – and call it “Healthy Forests.”

They make let industry pollute our air – and call it “Clear Skies.”

The President himself – President Bush – proudly told the American people that his budget will cut the deficit in half in five years. But his budget does not pay for Iraq – it does not pay for Afghanistan – it does not pay for his tax cuts for the rich.

My Colleagues – instead of searching for weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, we should be searching for truth right here at home. And we won't find it at the other end of Pennsylvania Avenue.

The British novelist, John Le Carre' (Car-RAY) once said "I think the single greatest enemy is the misuse of information, the perversion of the truth in the hands of terribly skilful people."

On the eve of the anniversary of the invasion of Iraq, we all must reflect on these words. President Bush and his administration have misused information. They have perverted the truth.

And now, nearly six hundred Americans are dead.

Ten thousand civilians are dead.

Hundreds of thousands of our sons and daughters – brave men and women – have been torn from their families and sent thousands of miles from home.

I would ask the President what they are fighting for – I would ask him why so many of our young people are dead and wounded – but I don't want his answer. I don't want the answer from Vice President Cheney, Secretary Powell, Donald Rumsfeld or Paul Wolfowitz. The American people don't want more of what we have been hearing for the past year.

What we want, Mr. Speaker, is the truth.