the Bush administration before the war that Iraq possessed large stockpiles of these weapons; not weapons programs, which is the terminology the administration now chooses to use, but weapons themselves.

On August 26, 2002, Vice President Cheney said, ''Simply stated, there is no doubt that Saddam Hussein now has weapons of mass destruction.''

Have we made any progress at all in finding those weapons? Have the dozens of Iraqi scientists interviewed by American intelligence officials provided any useful information? Is the administration still confident that weapons stockpiles will be found?

It is not enough to say, well, other people thought Iraq had weapons, too, because neither the Clinton administration nor the United Nations launched a war based on their suspicions. The Bush administration did, and the burden of proof rests on their shoulders.

The White House has recently admitted that a piece of evidence used in the State of the Union no less as proof of Iraq's nuclear weapons program is not credible. I am referring to the assertion that Iraq had attempted to purchase yellow cake uranium from Africa. The administration now says that the proof of that claim was not strong enough to merit inclusion in a Presidential speech.

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But, Mr. Speaker, the intelligence community knew at the time of the State of the Union that the Africa uranium story was not credible, which leaves us with two possibilities: either the administration knew the claim was bogus and chose to make it anyway, or critical intelligence information did not make it into the hands of the President or the dozens of people who wrote, reviewed, edited, or commented on the State of the Union.

Both of these possibilities are deeply disturbing.

This is not some small matter, as some would have us believe. The majority leader of this House the other day dismissed questions about the uranium issue, saying it is ''very easy to pick one little flaw here and one little flaw there.''

One little flaw? I could not disagree more. The specter of an Iraqi nuclear attack was cited as an important and compelling reason the United States launched a preemptive, nearly unilateral invasion that has led to the deaths of over 200 American soldiers.

On the path on war, the Congress and the American people deserve fact, not selective spin. We may have honest disagreements about how to respond to the threats posed by other countries, but we must have a credible assessment of what those threats really are.

More and more, it looks like we did not get that credible assessment.

And if the buildup to the war was flawed, its aftermath looks even worse.

Mr. Speaker, U.S. soldiers are being constantly attacked; dozens have been killed since the President was flown onto the USS *Abraham Lincoln* and declared the war to be over.

It is becoming disturbingly clear that the administration did not have a coherent, workable plan in place to deal with the realities of post-war Iraq. Basic infrastructure, the economy, political and civil society, are all in bad shape. Worse, attacks against American soldiers appear to be growing in both intensity and coordination. And President Bush's response to these attacks? ''Bring 'em on.''

Well, I must say that I was deeply, deeply disturbed by such a cavalier comment. It does not take any courage for a President or a Member of Congress to say such a thing. We are not out there on the front lines, standing nervous guard in the searing heat, unable to distinguish friend from foe, with lousy food and no idea of when a reunion with loved ones will come.

These are some of the concerns that I share with a growing number of Americans.

One of my constituents from Worcester, Massachusetts, wrote, ''Americans were made to feel that their lives were in immediate danger; yet months later, no weapons have been found. Americans do care. I did not take to the streets in protest during the war, because I wanted to believe that our government had substantial proof that it was vital for our security. I love my country, because I am allowed to ask these questions. Silence and apathy can also be dangerous to national security.''

I believe it is time to get the United Nations and the international community more fully involved in the reconstruction process. We cannot do this by ourselves or with a small hand-picked group of others.

Mr. Speaker there is a lot at stake here. We need to get this right. We need to know the truth, and all of us, Democrats, Republicans, and Independents have a responsibility to pursue that truth. We have a responsibility to continue to ask tough questions and demand straight answers.

Thorough, bipartisan, and public investigations are in order. And I strongly support the creation of a select bipartisan commission to conduct those investigations and make the results known to the American people.

One final thing, Mr. Speaker. Never, ever again should we rush to war. This House had 1 day of debate on Iraq in October. One day. Congress did not ask the right questions. Congress did not demand the right proof. Our lack of thoughtful debate reflected very poorly on this institution; and today, Mr. Speaker, sadly, we are paying that price.

MEDICAL LIABILITY REFORM IN DANGER IN SENATE

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

Mr. BURGESS. Mr. Speaker, I rise this evening with great concern about a recent development that occurred yesterday here on the Hill. In the other body, the failure to close debate on medical liability reform, the most important legislation that this body passed in March, was to address this crisis; and now that reform is in danger.

The House passed H.R. 5 to control unsustainable medical liability premium increases and to preserve patient access to important medical specialists. Based on a 1975 California law, the Medical Injury Compensation Reform Act of 1975, that has held down premium increases in that State, H.R. 5 would place a cap on noneconomic damages in medical liability cases.

This bill would not limit access to the courthouse. This bill would not limit damages to those who have been injured by negligent actions. This bill would not reward bad doctors. This bill would not protect HMOs.

This bill will increase access to important specialists such as neurosurgeons, perinatologists, and trauma surgeons. This bill will return sanity to a legal system that currently resembles a Las Vegas gaming device.

This past March, back in north Texas, a Dallas neurosurgeon opened his mail and found a 5-figure premium increase in his medical liability insurance. He said, enough is enough, and he left town. This placed the entire trauma network in the Dallas-Fort Worth area on the brink of crisis. Again, good doctors driven from their practice by increasing liability premiums brought on by the trial attorneys.

This crisis is driving young doctors from practicing medicine or, in fact, it is keeping young adults from even considering medicine as a career, creating a potential physician deficit well into the future.

Mr. Speaker, this Congress needs to reform this system now, or surely it will collapse under its own weight. I am saddened by the intransigence of some Members in this town to not even consider this issue with seriousness and foresight.

Mr. Speaker, how could they do that? I hope that this Congress will confront this crisis with the seriousness that it deserves. Patients need relief. The country is asking us to lead. Let us do the right thing and send a medical liability reform bill to the President this year. He has already promised us that he would sign it. We should do nothing less.

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

(Mr. HOBSON addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)