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ACCENT

Speaker blasts Bush

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A former U.S. Ambassador chided America's neo-conservative movement, accusing its members of promoting the war in Iraq for disingenuous reasons.

More than 1,000 people, mainly students and faculty, listened to Joseph Wilson's speech, "Iraq, The Three Great Debates," in the Reitz Union's Grand Ballroom on Thursday night.

"We don't go to war for opportunity, we go to war to defend our national security," said Wilson, who was an ambassador under the Clinton administration.

Wilson was the last U.S. diplomat to speak with Saddam Hussein prior to the Gulf War and said he recognizes that Hussein is a "horrible psychopath."

"[The neo-conservatives] are parasites who found the Republican Party as a host for this decade."

Joseph Wilson
former U.S. ambassador

But the neo-conservatives accused Hussein of masterminding the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorists' attacks only days after it happened, he said, before information could be gathered. Wilson said members of this new movement helped to promote false propaganda to further espouse the group's agenda.

He added: "[The neo-conservatives] are

parasites who found the Republican Party as a host for this decade."

First-year law student Kurt Zaner said he disagreed with Wilson's comments.

"I think the neo-conservatives represent more of Americans' views than the ambassador implied," Zaner said.

Wilson's anger toward the Bush administration began about a year ago. Wilson went on the offensive after President Bush told the nation in January's State of the Union address that Hussein had bought uranium from African leaders for nuclear weapons materials. Wilson had been a CIA consultant in Africa charged with uncovering this and said President Bush's accusations were unfounded. He wrote his grievances in a New York Times editorial.

"There's nothing to [the Bush administration's] report," he said.

The administration still decided to go to war last March.

"The most solemn decision is that decision to send sons and daughters to kill and die for our country," Wilson said. "It should be based on a set of commonly accepted facts."

But Wilson said Washington insiders wanted to hurt him for his comments and that they leaked his wife's identity to the press. She was a CIA agent.

"[Those insiders] made a political point," Wilson said of his wife's outing, "to discourage others from coming forward."

Despite the recent controversy surrounding him, Wilson said the bigger issue is Iraq's future and the lives of American soldiers.



Nick West / Alligator Staff

Former U.S. ambassador Joseph Wilson speaks to a near-capacity crowd Thursday night. Wilson's speech focused on the situation in Iraq.

The United States should send more troops to the country, with hopes to minimize military deaths, he said. Wilson added that the United States should solicit military aid from many nations, helping to put a more international face to Iraq's stabilization and democratization.

"We can't afford to fail," he said.