Mr. Speaker, all Americans were shocked by what we saw

at the Abu Ghraib prison. The abuse of Iraqi prisoners offends our

values as human beings and as Americans. I am deeply disturbed by the

administration's handling of this issue. A 3-month-old investigation

has only now come to light. Some are questioning whether we may have

lost control of civilian contractors who fall outside of the military

chain of command.

But there is something equally as alarming about this news, the

discovery that unregulated private contractors are interrogating

prisoners in Iraq on behalf of the Coalition Provisional Authority.

This now becomes a question of accountability. In the fog of war, it

is not only our military but also private companies deciding whom to

deploy, whom to carry out operations, and how those people are vetted.

There is almost no congressional oversight, civil regulation, or

military law that governs them. By contracting out these critical tasks

to civilian contractors who fall outside of the chain of command, there

is no quality assurance, and there is questionable accountability.

The Secretary of Defense has been inattentive and perhaps negligent

at great cost to our reputation and our security, and the call for the

Secretary of Defense resignation is growing stronger day by day. At the

very least, the Republican leadership in this House should convene

bipartisan, bicameral congressional hearings to examine this urgent

matter.

This reminds us that before we win the hearts and the minds of the

Iraqis in this effort, we must win something else, trust, the trust of

the American people.