Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding time and

for his tremendous leadership on behalf of the national security of our

country. I also thank the gentleman for his attempt to develop a

bipartisan resolution that would bring us all together and take the

opportunity to send a true message to the world of democratic values.

Mr. Speaker, last Thursday, Secretary Rumsfeld came to the Congress

and he briefed Members of the House of Representatives on the situation

in Iraq. He neglected to tell Members of Congress that the situation in

Iraq included this most unfortunate, disgraceful situation in the

prison. He withheld that information from the Congress of the United

States when he had full knowledge of it and apparently had full

knowledge for a while.

Indeed, that very evening, ``60 Minutes'' broke the story, a story it

had been working on for a while. So why was Congress the last to know,

especially on a day when the Secretary was briefing the Congress on the

situation in Iraq?

The distinguished chairman of the Committee on Armed Services has

said repeatedly in the course of this debate that this information was

made public in January by a public statement by General Kimmett. I do

not know when that constituted keeping Congress informed; and if that

is the standard, if a sentence that does not really explain the

situation expressed in a press conference in Iraq meets the standard

for informing Congress, then we are in a lot more trouble than we even

thought.

Please do not bring that up as an example of ``letting us know,''

because I do not think anybody, even within the administration, would

have called that sufficient notification to Congress.

Since last Thursday when the Secretary of Defense withheld

information from the Congress, the Senate has held robust hearings.

They stopped in their tracks. They stopped the business of the Senate,

which was the reauthorization of the Defense Act, and went into

committee as the Committee on Armed Services because of the urgency of

this matter. Yet this House had to be dragged kicking and screaming

into having hearings on the subject. We should have hearings not only

in the Committee on Armed Services, but in the Committee on

International Relations. We should be having these hearings in the

Committee on the Judiciary as well. We should be having these hearings

in the Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, it touches so many

jurisdictions in this House, because we must get to the bottom of this.

So today we have this resolution that has come to the floor, missing

an opportunity to send a very clear, forceful, values-based message to

the world and to the American people about who we are and what we stand

for and what we will not tolerate in the behavior of our people.

We all agree that our troops, our men and women in uniform, and even

the civilians over there, are courageous, patriotic, and have acted

with great courage. They are willing to sacrifice their lives. We owe

them our deepest gratitude and respect and our prayers. This resolution

acknowledges that fact, and it is right to do so.

Some U.S. personnel, military and civilian, abused Iraqi prisoners in

ways that are shocking and reprehensible. The resolution acknowledges

that fact and deplores it. Unfortunately, by including a number of

causes that seek to compare life in Iraq after the invasion with

conditions that existed before, the resolution creates an inference

that whatever post-invasion improvements exist, somehow they mitigate

the abhorrent nature of the treatment of the prisoners. These

``whereas es'' have no place in the same resolution.

The resolution should be focused tightly on the scandal and the need

to find out why it occurred and who should be held accountable.

Diffusing the focus conceals an important fact: this scandal increases

the danger to our troops in Iraq, makes their mission more difficult to

accomplish, and threatens the interests of the United States around the

world. Even with a concerted effort in which a better-crafted

resolution could have played an important part, it will be a very long

time before the standing of the United States is restored in the eyes

of the world, unless we face up to this matter.

Congressional oversight of the war in Iraq has not been aggressive

enough. The administration's failure to provide accountability for its

policies and an accounting of the money already provided has not been

questioned adequately. Compounding that record of inaction by not

investigating this matter thoroughly will be inexcusable.

This resolution could have called clearly for congressional

investigations, to include a review of the role that the U.S. civilian

contractors and other civilians may have played in it. That suggestion

was outright rejected by the Republicans, saying we will not include

the investigation and the contractors in this resolution; we will not

add it. And it begs the question, Why?

Today, America has an opportunity to show the world our greatness by

sending a message to the American people and to the world that we

deplore this conduct, that we understand the significance of these

abuses in the eyes of the Arab world, and that we will act to uncover

the facts to find out who is responsible and to make sure that it will

never happen again.

Every opportunity we get, we will always offer our praise and

gratitude to our troops. We could have done that in a resolution that

would have had bipartisan support, because it was very important that

we send a message to the Arab world that we do understand the

significance of these abuses to them. This is very, very, very

significant; but it has been lost in the resolution before us.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support the motion to recommit

to be offered by the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. Hoyer), which

delivers a message that truly reflects America's values.

It does so clearly and forcefully, and there is a reason for that.

The gentleman from Maryland (Mr. Hoyer) has

been a champion for human rights for as long as he has been in the

Congress, and probably longer. His leadership on the Helsinki

Commission, his bipartisan work on these issues gives him standing and

authority to speak in a way, again, that clearly reflects America's

values.

The Republican resolution does not do that; the Hoyer motion to

recommit does.

Let us leave no doubt in the hearts and the minds of the world that

we will live by the principles that we preach.