Mr. Speaker, I rise in opposition to this resolution as

written. Like so many resolutions we have seen here on the Iraq war,

this one is not at all what it purports to be. Were this really a

resolution condemning abuse of prisoners and other detainees, I doubt

anyone here would oppose it. Clearly the abuse and humiliation of those

in custody is deplorable, and the pictures we have all seen over the

past week are truly horrific.

But why are we condemning a small group of low-level service members

when we do not yet know the full story? Why are we rushing to insert

ourselves into an ongoing investigation, pretending that we already

know the conclusions when we have yet to even ask all the questions? As

revolting as the pictures we have seen are, they are all we have to go

by, and we are reacting to these pictures alone. We do not and cannot

know the full story at this point, yet we jump to condemn those who

have not even yet had the benefit of a trial. We appear to be operating

on the principle of guilty until proven innocent. It seems convenient

and perhaps politically expedient to blame a small group of ``bad

apples'' for what may well turn out to be something completely

different--as the continuously widening investigation increasingly

suggests.

Some of the soldiers in the photographs claim that their superior

officers and the civilian contractors in charge of the interrogations

forced them to pose this way. We cannot say with certainty what took

place in Iraq's prisons based on a few photographs. We have heard that

some of those soldiers put in charge of prisons in Iraq were woefully

unprepared for the task at hand. We have heard that they were thrown

into a terribly confusing, stressful, and dangerous situation with

little training and little understanding of the rules and

responsibilities. What additional stresses and psychological pressures

were applied by those in charge of interrogations? We don't know. Does

this excuse what appears to be reprehensible behavior? Not in the

slightest, but it does suggest that we need to get all the facts before

we draw conclusions. It is more than a little disturbing that this

resolution does not even mention the scores of civilian contractors

operating in these prisons at whom numerous fingers are being pointed

as instigators of these activities. While these individuals seem to

operate with impunity, this legislation before us all but convicts

without trial those lowest in the chain of command.

But this resolution is only partly about the alleged abuses of

detainees in Iraq. Though this is the pretext for the legislation, this

resolution is really just an enthusiastic endorsement of our nation-

building activities in Iraq. This resolution ``expresses the continuing

solidarity and support of the House of Representatives . . . with the

Iraqi people in building a viable Iraqi government and a secure

nation.'' Also this resolution praises the ``mission to rebuild and

rehabilitate a proud nation after liberating it. . . .'' At least the

resolution is honest in admitting that our current presence in Iraq is

nothing more than a nation-building exercise.

Further, this resolution explicitly endorses what is clearly a failed

policy in Iraq. I wonder whether anyone remembers that we did not go to

war against Iraq to build a better nation there, or to bring about

``improvements in . . . water, sewage, power, infrastructure,

transportation, telecommunications, and food security . . .'' as this

resolution touts. Nor did those who urged this war claim at the time

the goals were to ``significantly improv[e] . . . food availability,

health service, and educational opportunities'' in Iraq, as this

legislation also references. No, the war essential, they claimed, to

stop a nation poised to use weapons of mass destruction to inflict

unspeakable harm against the United States. Now historical revisionists

are pointing out how wonderful our nation-building is going in Iraq, as

if that justifies the loss of countless American and Iraqi civilian

lives.

This resolution decries the fact the administration had not informed

Congress of these abuses and that the administration has not kept

Congress in the information loop. Yet, Congress made it clear to the

administration from the very beginning that Congress wanted no

responsibility for the war in Iraq. If Congress wanted to be kept in

the loop it should have vigorously exercised its responsibilities from

the very beginning. This means, first and foremost, that Congress

should have voted on a declaration of war as required in the

Constitution. Congress, after abrogating this responsibility in October

2002, now is complaining that it is in the dark. Indeed, who is to say

that the legal ambiguity created by the Congressional refusal to

declare war may not have contributed to the notion that detainees need

not be treated in accordance with the Geneva Convention, that governs

the treatment of prisoners during a time of war? Until Congress takes

up its Constitutional responsibilities, complaints that the

administration is not sufficiently forthcoming with information ring

hollow.

This resolution calls on the administration to keep Congress better

informed. But Congress has the power--and the obligation--to keep

itself better informed! If Congress is truly interested in being

informed, it should hold hearings--exercising its subpoena power if

necessary. Depending on the administration to fulfill what is our own

Constitutional responsibility is once again passing the buck. Isn't

this what has gotten us into this trouble in the first place?

I urge my colleagues to oppose this resolution.