Mr. President, I had not intended to speak to the

appalling news in the last several days about the mistreatment of

prisoners in Iraq. But I must say I come to the floor with grave

concerns about the news, about the events, about the message it sends,

about the extraordinary impact this violation of human rights can have

on our efforts to succeed in that country, and about our appalling

inability to explain how this happened.

While I certainly am not in a position today to speak with any

clarity or

definitive character with regard to the facts, let me say that I don't

know that there has ever been a time when we needed a better

understanding of how this could have happened, why it happened, how

widespread these practices may have been, what the administration has

done about it, what they intend to do about it, why the President was

not informed, why the Defense Secretary was not informed until just

recently, why no one has seen the report, why the Intelligence

Committees were not informed, and why, in other words, has there been

this extraordinary disconnect, this unbelievable failure of

communication and of oversight.

We need answers. I hope no later than the end of this week the

Secretary of Defense can come to the Senate, as he does with some

regularity, and explain to us what they know, what happened, and what

is going to be done about it.

We must do everything we can to ensure that we understand the

circumstances surrounding these appalling acts. We must also be

provided with a very specific and detailed response that spells out the

measures taken to discipline those responsible and outlines what steps

will be taken to ensure this never happens again.

Somehow, we have to say to the international community that this is

not the United States of America. I think it is imperative that the

Senate itself speak to this issue in some manner. We should send a

clear signal through a resolution or some other collective and forceful

means that expresses how important it is to adhere to the international

standards respecting the human rights of every person.

We cannot be silent. We must learn, respond, and speak out. I hope

all that will be done at the earliest possible time.