Mr. President, I share the sense of outrage and disgust

that has been expressed by so many Americans since the allegations and

horrifying pictures of deeply troubling abuses at the Abu Ghraib prison

in Iraq have come to light.

I am particularly sickened by the damage that has been done to the

brave men and women of the United States military. The depraved acts of

a few risk tarnishing the reputation of hundreds of thousands of

American servicemen and women who behave honorably every day, even in

extraordinarily difficult circumstances. These acts also put our troops

at risk, by casting them in the role of abusers, making it more

difficult to gain the trust and cooperation of Iraqis. Anytime the

Geneva Convention is violated, the framework of basic standards on

which all military personnel and their families depend is weakened.

I am also troubled by the irreparable damage done to American power.

Our power does not come only from military might or economic muscle. We

also derive power from what we stand for. Our commitment to basic human

rights, to human dignity, and to the rule of law gives us power to

persuade and to lead and to inspire. When this commitment is called

into question, American power is diminished, and this is a terrible

loss.

Now that these appalling acts have been exposed and reported around

the world, we must proceed to show the world something else--that our

military, our political system, and our society do not condone this

behavior, that we are capable of a full and transparent accounting for

what has happened and how it has happened, that we will take action to

correct the failures in the system, and that we are committed to

addressing these abuses through the rule of law.