Mr. President, although I must be necessarily

absent for the vote this afternoon, I want to express my support for

this important resolution and briefly speak on the issue that has

shocked all of us during the past two weeks--the horrific abuse

sustained by the prisoners and detainees in Iraq.

All of us condemn what has happened in Iraq's prisons. The acts the

world has now seen are deplorable; they are inhumane; they are

appalling. Every day brings new evidence of horrors. These actions are

completely inconsistent with our values, and completely

counterproductive to our efforts to help the Iraqi people achieve

security, stability, and freedom.

These images cast a dark shadow on all our efforts in Iraq, and they

make the work of our brave military men and women in Iraq only harder.

These shameful acts of a few have put many in harm's way. As we condemn

these acts and punish those responsible all the way up the chain of

command, we must continue to support our soldiers in Iraq and around

the world. We cannot let the images and stories from the last week--and

the images and stories that will certainly emerge in the coming weeks--

distort the fact that the vast majority of men and women serving their

country today in Iraq and elsewhere are doing so with great dignity,

skill and patriotism.

This is not just a major setback for our efforts in Iraq. Just think

about the damage that these acts have done to America and our authority

to promote peaceful, democratic change around the world. At the same

time when we are trying to reach out to Arab countries--and to help

their societies develop more opportunities so their people can live in

greater freedom--these photographs and the behavior they depict do

tremendous harm to America's ability to lead.

That is why we must stand together today to condemn these actions in

the strongest terms. But our words will not be enough. We must follow

up our words with deeds. There must be a full investigation into how

these acts were allowed to happen, and an exhaustive effort to see that

measures are put in place so that they never happen again. Many

questions must be answered, and we must have the administration's full

cooperation. The American people--and the Iraqi people--deserve

answers. We must hold accountable those responsible all the way up the

military chain of command, and they must be punished to the fullest

extent of the law.

I also believe that these acts reveal such a fundamental failure of

leadership that we need to have accountability here in Washington. We

cannot just blame this on the individual soldiers involved. We must

show the world that no one can shirk responsibility no matter how high

that responsibility goes, or what office one might hold.

So if we want to signal to the rest of the world that we in fact

emphatically reject what happened; if we want to send the message that

what happened in that prison was inconsistent with American values; if

we want to say to the rest of the world that we as a nation want to

change course here, then we need to hold our leadership at the highest

levels accountable.