Mr. President, I rise today to offer my strong

support for a Senate resolution condemning the abuses in United States

detention facilities in Iraq.

This resolution makes clear that the abusive behavior we have seen

graphically portrayed in photographs, detailed in the report of MG

Antonio Taguba, and described by Secretary Rumsfeld in testimony last

week, are unacceptable.

Such conduct is wrong, un-American, and inconsistent with the history

and tradition of our military services. It is critical that the Senate

voices its absolute rejection of the conduct, and this resolution does

just that.

It must be understood that this resolution, however, is narrow and

focused. It is confined to expressing our views on the specific conduct

at issue. It does not purport to be a comprehensive view

on the implications of this growing scandal, nor a conclusive statement

of a congressional investigation into this incident, and its

ramifications.

I believe that such an investigation is necessary and should be

undertaken as soon as possible. We need to know why the Geneva

Convention appears to have been ignored. We need to understand how such

a debacle could have happened, and what orders were given by who, and

when, which governed the prison at Abu Ghraib. We need to know why the

reports of the Red Cross and others were not responded to in a

comprehensive and timely manner. And why was this problem concealed for

months from the Congress and the American people.

If the conflict in Iraq is seen as a battle for the hearts and minds

of the Iraqi people, then it is unfathomable how such a devastating

failure in that battle could be allowed to happen. This is not just

about personal accountability, or abuse--it is about the conduct of a

conflict upon which the future of our security may depend.

It is also important to recognize that planning and implementing a

military detention and interrogation operation is a necessary and

important part of a competent and professional war plan. There are

three reasons why this is so:

First, the information gained from proper interrogation is critical

to protect our warfighters--it allows us to deal with the tactical risk

on the ground in Iraq. Simply put, military interrogation is part of

the overall intelligence-gathering mechanism which is designed to

provide timely, accurate information to front line troops and strategic

planners. Done correctly, a well-run, properly administered military

detention system will yield information that will keep our men and

women in uniform alive in the face of an increasingly violent

insurgency.

Second, detention and interrogation is inherently risky, and that

risk is a moral risk. It is not easy to run prisons, interrogate

detainees, and maintain order in a manner consistent with our Nation's

moral values. There are certainly some guides to help manage this risk:

the Geneva Convention, for instance, provides a well-established set of

guidelines that can not only allow American soldiers to adhere to

international law, but help them ensure that their conduct is

acceptable to Americans and to our moral code.

Third, it should be apparent that the administration of a military

prison system inside Iraq is a clear danger point in the context of our

strategic goals--prisons pose a necessary, but important, strategic

risk. Failure to adhere to the highest standards of conduct will fuel

the increasingly hostile view of Americans and American policy in Iraq

and the Middle East.

I have reviewed Secretary Rumsfeld's testimony, as well as other

information provided in public statements of the administration and

private briefings.

I am becoming increasingly concerned that the Secretary, and the

Administration, are missing the point of this growing scandal.

Of course there is a need to investigate individual wrongdoing and

hold people accountable for their acts according to the Code of

Military Justice. But much more needs to be done. I see little evidence

that there has been adequate planning for the management and function

of military detention facilities in Iraq, and this failure needs to be

addressed now.

This is critical for the three reasons I outlined above. In essence,

military detention facilities should be looked upon exactly like other

elements of war-planning--necessary to fight successfully, but carrying

risks to our soldiers and to our mission.

I am concerned that this function has not been adequately planned.

It does not surprise me that we see the lack of planning becoming

apparent in the revelation of individual misconduct, but I think it is

critical that the Department of Defense take on the larger issue, and

take it on immediately.

The situation is grim. Each of the three risks I mentioned have come

to be.

Some of our soldiers, inadequately supervised and poorly commanded,

have succumbed to the moral hazards of running a prison. I do not

excuse their actions, and they will be held accountable for their

actions. But it is predictable that without adequate command and

control such conduct will happen in a prison, and for that Secretary

Rumsfeld and senior Army commanders are responsible.

It is clear that the potentially valuable source of tactical

intelligence that could have been gained through the competent and

professional administration of military detention facilities was

wantonly thrown away by allowing those facilities to degenerate into a

chaotic and ungoverned free-for-all.

It is my view that there is a place for properly conducted

interrogation in the context of a military detention facility.

But it seems to me that what we have seen is not overly aggressive

interrogation, but wanton cruelty and abuse, unconnected with any

doctrinally acceptable method of prisoner interrogation.

We will never know what potentially valuable tactical intelligence

was lost in the chaos of Abu Ghraib prison, but I am confident that

whatever intelligence was there was unlikely to have been elicited in

that environment.

Again, Secretary Rumsfeld and senior commanders are responsible for

this failure, and I call upon them to immediately remedy this

situation.

We have troops on the ground, under fire, and we cannot afford to

abandon a mechanism for gathering intelligence which could help make

our troops safer.

Finally, the failure to run this element of our war effort

competently has resulted in a catastrophic setback to our strategic

interests.

It should have been self-evident that failure to run U.S. detention

facilities in a professional, competent and lawful manner would, when

made public, adversely affect our prospects in Iraq and in the region.

Simply put, American soldiers will come under increasing fire

because of the failure to run the prisons correctly, and whatever

prospects remain for peacefully transferring power to an Iraqi

government have been diminished.

In sum, it is important to recognize that planning for detention and

interrogation of prisoners is as much a part of war planning as making

sure that there is enough gas for tanks, enough ammunition for guns and

armor for our soldiers.

I am concerned that the failure to plan for this aspect of the war

is consistent with a general pattern at the Pentagon--an unwillingness

to plan for the realities of Iraq and the Middle East. We will all pay

for that failure.

One key part of the resolution speaks to the roll of the Congress,

noting that ``the best interests of the United States and the American

people will be served by a full investigation by the appropriate

Committees of the United States Senate exercising their oversight

responsibilities.'' This is a critical point. This body must

immediately begin its task of addressing this issue.

There are a few particular questions upon which I hope we will

focus:

Whether, and to what extent, the conditions and procedures in Abu

Ghraib and other prisons came about because of particular policy

decisions by senior officials. For instance, who made the decision,

reported in the media, to use prison guards to ``set the conditions''

for interrogations?

Why was the critical task of administering Abu Gharaib entrusted to

soldiers without adequate training or guidance?

Who in the command structure is responsible for maintaining and

administering our military program to detain and interrogate prisoners

in Iraq and elsewhere?

I hope we can answer these, and other questions, and make the

changes necessary to make our nation safer.