Mr. President, I rise in strong support of this Senate

resolution expressing our clear condemnation of the despicable abuses

of Iraqi prisoners at Abu Ghraib prison.

Nearly a week ago, I called on the Senate to clearly and forthrightly

condemn the despicable acts perpetrated at Abu Ghraib prison.

The pictures and description of the treatment inflicted on Iraqi

detainees was too brutal, too inconsistent with what this country

stands for, and far too consequential for our troops for this body to

stay silent.

Given the severe consequences on our troops and our efforts in Iraq,

it is important that the Senate say to the world that:

No. 1, the Senate commends the American forces serving honorably in

Iraq;

No. 2, the Senate condemns the mistreatment of Iraqi detainees and

apologizes to the victims of this abuse;

No. 3, the Senate is prepared to exercise its oversight

responsibility and fully investigate these incidents; and

No. 4, the United States government--both the executive branch and

the legislative branch--will hold accountable all of those responsible

for these despicable acts.

This resolution does each of these and makes clear that the Senate

will fulfill its responsibility in the face of these troubling

revelations.

That's what the resolution does. Let me say a few words, Mr.

President, about what it does not do.

The resolution does not spell the end of our work, In fact, the

Senate is just getting down to the business of investigating what

happened and how widespread these practices are.

The Armed Services Committee has another hearing tomorrow. We look

forward to hearing the testimony of General Taguba, someone who had the

courage to fully document these abuses not just in Iraq but Afghanistan

as well and bring them to the attention of his civilian and military

superiors.

The hearing also comes as news agencies publish reports of even wider

spread abuse practices in Iraq, all of which apparently began in

Guantanamo when senior administration officials adopted a policy to

permit interrogation tactics that this country has never before

allowed. So we are at the beginning of this effort, not the end.

Nor does this resolution limit in any way whom or what Congress

should and must investigate. As horrendous as they are, we are now told

that these pictures may only be the tip of the iceberg. And we learned

today that the International Committee of the Red Cross was expressing

concerns directly to the administration as early as March 2003--over a

year ago.

Lastly, this resolution does not absolve anyone. We will have done a

great disservice in this investigation if only a handful of enlisted

men and women are held accountable and the actions and decisions of

those higher up in the military and civilian chain of command are

ignored. Anyone who ordered these actions, tolerated these abuses, or

contributed to an atmosphere that led to this mistreatment must be held

accountable.

I join with several of my colleagues--Republican and Democrat--who

have made clear that we need to ensure that the entire chain of command

is held accountable for these despicable acts, and we will have failed

the American people if we do otherwise.

Like most Americans, we learned about these horrific acts on national

television. And like the overwhelming majority of Americans, we were

shocked at the brutality the pictures depicted.

The simple truth is that America stands for democracy and the

unalienable rights of individuals, and the vast majority of Americans

serving in Iraq embody those principles--and do so under unimaginably

difficult and dangerous circumstances.

In order to uphold the service and sacrifices of these fine men and

women and to demonstrate to the world--yet again--what America truly

stands for, we must send this clear message.

The stakes here could not be higher. We are at a dangerous and

difficult crossroads in Iraq. If these pictures go unanswered, the

consequences could not be more grave for our troops and their security,

for our goal of a free and unified Iraq, and for our hope for a stable

Middle East.