Mr. Speaker, Yogi Berra once told us that ``When you

arrive at a fork in the road, you should take it.'' Well, the United

States has reached a fork in the road when it comes to torturing other

human beings, and it is time we took it, once and for all.

Senator John McCain has offered an amendment to the Defense

appropriations bill clarifying that the United States Government,

including the military and the CIA, does not condone the use of

torture, putting the United States in a position to set an example for

the rest of the world by clearly affirming our opposition to the use of

torture as a military tactic.

Yet if the Bush administration has its way, Congress will reject this

amendment, reserving its right to employ the use of torture in certain

situations. That is right: The Bush administration has come out against

an amendment that states for the record that the United States opposes

the use of torture. Do they really want people to think we support

torture?

For one thing, America's use of torture certainly has not helped us

win any friends so far. It did not win us friends when it was revealed

that the American military had abused prisoners at Guantanamo Bay. It

did not win us any friends when thousands of photographs were released

showing U.S. service members torturing, beating, humiliating, and

generally violating Iraqi prisoners of war. And it certainly did not

win us any friends last week when it was revealed that the United

States might possess dozens of top-secret military prisons in Eastern

Europe for the sole purpose of viciously interrogating enemy prisoners.

Never mind the fact that torture as a tactic does not provide accurate

results. Individuals who are placed in unbearable situations will say

just about anything to end the pain that they are suffering. Yet, even

if torture produced positive results, it violates every single

principle that our country stands for.

I am not the only one that understands this. Most Members of Congress

on both sides of the aisle are opposed to torture. This weekend,

Senator Chuck Hagel, who is no stranger to conservative politics, did

not pull any punches when he said, ``I think the administration is

making a terrible mistake in opposing John McCain's amendment on

detainees and torture.'' He said, ``making a terrible mistake.''

Yet, the President responds with the same tired talking points.

Yesterday, he tried to justify his opposition to the McCain amendment

by saying, our President, ``We will aggressively pursue the enemy, but

we will do so under the law.'' Then he went on to say, ``We do not

torture.''

Mr. Speaker, does the President think he can paper over this problem

and expect it to go away? If the President is so adamant that the

United States does not torture, why does he continue to oppose the

McCain amendment banning the use of torture? Unfortunately, this is

just business as usual for an administration that has time and again

taken the wrong path when arriving at a fork in the road.

Let us not forget that there were plenty of other options for the

United States before the President made the decision to go to war in

Iraq, a war that has subsequently cost the lives of nearly 2,100

American soldiers, uncounted tens of thousands of innocent Iraqi

civilians, and caused grave injuries to another 15,000 American

soldiers.

Now, the President and his administration have yet another choice.

They ought to take the high road when it comes to permanently ending

the use of torture, and they ought to take the high road in bringing

our troops home from Iraq and returning Iraq to the Iraqi people.

The Bush administration can never take back the many mistakes that

have been made over the past several years: A failed war in Iraq,

heinous acts of torture around the world, and a shamefully cynical

foreign policy that has put Americans at greater risk than ever before.

But we are at another crossroads, and it is not too late to take the

right path. If we do not, we risk suffering another Yogi Berra

prophecy: ``Deja vu all over again.''