Mr. Speaker, we are all deeply troubled by the

graphic pictures which show U.S. military service members humiliating,

torturing and sexually abusing Iraqi prisoners. The reports that U.S.

military police and intelligence personnel violated the most basic

standards of moral conduct in addition to the established tenets of the

Geneva Convention relative to the treatment of prisoners of war have

ignited outrage within this country and throughout the rest of the

world. This situation has tarnished America's reputation as a guardian

of individual civil liberties and as a protector of human rights. While

the vast majority of our soldiers are doing their duty with dignity and

with honor, the grotesque abuses of Iraqi prisoners are truly un-

American. They go against everything our country stands for and holds

dear. The images of these abuses are also a major setback in our war

against terrorism. Our standing in the Arab world has been seriously

undermined as a result of what happened at Abu Ghraib.

As a member of the Defense Appropriations Subcommittee, I have

listened to the testimony and heard the explanations of the highest

Pentagon leadership as to the abuses of Iraqi prisoners, but I am not

convinced that these abuses are an isolated incident involving a few

military members. The likelihood is that the lack of supervision that

allowed them to occur may in fact be systemic, at least in some parts

of the military intelligence and military police commands.

This crisis must be immediately dealt with through a full-fledged

investigation into the breakdown of military regulations and the

possibility of widespread prison abuse. Furthermore, the individuals

responsible for perpetrating the abuses as well as their commanding

officers must be held accountable for criminal wrongdoing. I do believe

that accountability, however, should extend considerably beyond the

prosecution of a handful of aberrant military personnel, private

contractors and their supervisors. Responsibility starts at the top.

With the existence of additional photos and videos of Iraqi detainees

still unreleased, it is likely that this crisis will not soon go away.

The transfer of Iraqi sovereignty is set to occur on June 30. The Bush

administration must drastically repair our standing in Iraq as well as

with the rest of the world before we can responsibly extricate

ourselves from this foreign policy blunder.

I emphasize foreign policy as opposed to military policy. Our

military accomplished their objective nearly flawlessly by liberating

the Iraqi people from Saddam Hussein's tyranny. But they were not

prepared to be long-term occupiers. That should never be their role nor

our national mission. The lack of a realistic exit strategy is one of

the reasons that I so strongly opposed this preemptive and unilateral

invasion.

Mr. Speaker, our mission in Iraq is at a crossroads. Our soldiers are

struggling to complete their missions without the proper training or

resources or support. The barbaric murder of Nicholas Berg clearly

demonstrates the depth of the resistance we face. The murder of

Nicholas Berg was a monstrous act for which there is no justification.

Our thoughts and our prayers are with his family. America's soldiers,

in fact, are serving with honor. We stand behind our courageous men and

women in uniform who are bearing the burden for this military action in

Iraq, and we are deeply grateful for their patriotism, their courage

and their sacrifice. But the security situation in Iraq has

deteriorated rather than improved. Last month, we lost more soldiers in

one month than at any time since the war began.

Mr. Speaker, our military was sent into battle without the right

equipment or the necessary support. Helicopter pilots have flown

battlefield missions without the best available antimissile systems.

According to a DOD commission report, roughly one-fourth of coalition

deaths have occurred as a result of attacks on unarmored vehicles,

because we do not have enough armored vehicles to go around. And our

failure to forge a true coalition has forced thousands in the National

Guard and Reserves to be away from their families and from their jobs

for more than a year with no end in sight.

Mr. Speaker, a failure to condemn what is wrong is a failure to

recognize what is right. Recently, a former leader of the 372nd

Military Police Company stated that minimizing the conduct of these MPs

that were responsible for the prison abuse by comparing it to the

reckless and violent acts of the Iraqi insurgents is wholly beside the

point. We must compare our actions to those of the men and women who

have honorably served this country. We have to stand up for our

standard of decency that we have set for the rest of the world and

stand up to the enemies of freedom.