Well, Mr. Speaker, if so many of these Iraqis are ready

to come up and to provide the security, the police work in the country,

then surely there should be no problem with putting American forces

into the background instead of having them up front.

The reality is that we have missed a lot of opportunities in Iraq

because of a failed policy. Our own State Department polls say that 80

percent of Iraqis view the United States as an unpopular occupier. That

is right, an occupier. Forty-five percent of Iraqi citizens think it is

morally okay to attack American troops. So if, in fact, Iraqis are

ready to keep security in their own country, surely now is the time to

let them do that.

We should have had, as General Shinseki said, more security forces in

from the beginning. He said a few hundred thousand troops. And if we

had had them there, maybe we could have won the hearts and minds of the

Iraqi people from the beginning when Saddam Hussein fell. But the

Pentagon and the civilian leadership thought General Shinseki did not

know what he was talking about and they put him out to pasture. But the

truth is, he knew what he was talking about.

There have been other mistakes made. In April of last year, the

shocking photographic evidence of prisoner abuse at Abu Ghraib became

public. In an instant, America's new image in the war on terror was

published around the world with photos of Iraqi prisoners being

subjected to cruel, unusual, and degrading treatment.

A report by Major General Antonio Taguba found

constituting

at Abu Ghraib. And,

unfortunately, Abu Ghraib is only the most publicized case of torture

in Iraq.

Regrettably, it has become clear that torture of detainees in United

States custody is not limited to Abu Ghraib or even Iraq. Since Abu

Ghraib, there have been increasing reports of torture. Most recently,

The Washington Post broke a story of secret CIA detention centers

around the globe where prisoners were being sent for questioning.

Under the leadership of President Bush and Vice President Cheney, the

United States has given up the moral high ground that we used to occupy

as an international leader.

Last month, President Bush defended U.S. interrogation practices,

proclaiming, However, he has refused to back up

these words. Instead, he and his administration have vehemently opposed

a provision that would specifically prohibit the use of torture as

official U.S. protocol.

They supported legislation that would strip the right of detainees

being held by the United States to the writ of habeas corpus, an 800-

year-old legal procedure grounded in the Magna Carta. Instead of

denouncing torture is never acceptable, the administration seems to

continually be looking for exceptions to the rule.

In the now-infamous ``torture memo,'' along with other documents, the

Justice Department sought to carve out an increasingly narrow

definition of detention. Instead of firing administration officials,

like Alberto Gonzales, who referred to the Geneva Convention as

and we have a President who promoted him to

the chief law enforcement officer of the United States of America,

Attorney General.

By accepting this behavior, the Bush administration has not only hurt

America's credibility around the world; but it has put our soldiers at

risk.

I have joined forces with a number of my colleagues to try to change

this course. However, the leadership in this body has kept us from

being heard. We have tried to obtain documents related to Federal

investigations of detainee abuse in Iraq, Afghanistan, Guantanamo; but

our efforts have been shut down by the majority in this body.

Mr. Speaker, 173 Members of this body have signed onto the Waxman

legislation to establish an independent commission to investigate these

abuses; but nearly 6 months after being introduced, this bill

languishes in committee without even a hearing from the majority.

President Bush and the majority did not want the independent 9/11

Commission. They have also opposed independent commissions to

investigate the Federal response to Hurricane Katrina. But just like

the revelations that came from the 9/11 Commission, an independent

investigation into our detainee policy would help us all in the end.

It is time to investigate these abuses. It is never too late to

regain our credibility around the world. I call on my colleagues to

stand up against torture by standing firm to the belief that the United

States has held for generations, that no individual in U.S. custody be

subject to cruel, inhumane or degrading treatment or punishment, any

time, any place, anywhere.