Mr. President, this is a troubling time in America.

Yesterday I spoke on this Senate floor about the despicable abuses

perpetrated against Iraqi prisoners. The damage done to every American

and to the reputation of our great Nation as a whole as a result of

these barbaric acts is incalculable. It has severely tarnished our

image as a nation of laws, a nation that for more than two centuries

has been a beacon of hope for oppressed people around the world.

Every day, quite rightly, we pride ourselves on our Constitution and

our Bill of Rights. After all, they were the template for the universal

declaration of human rights. We often criticize other nations for

violating those rights, for engaging in torture and other crimes, and

it is right that we do. We should speak out when human rights and

liberties are violated whenever and wherever it occurs.

But today we see our own faces in the mirror. Until recently, it was

beyond our ability to contemplate that we would become the subject of

such universal ridicule and scorn for the actions of a handful.

The reputation of our Armed Forces, certainly since the First World

War, has deservedly been the finest in the world. As the father of a

former marine, I can attest that the training of our troops and the

outstanding performance of the vast majority of them should make every

American proud. They conduct themselves professionally. They treat

others with respect. They perform bravely. And 138,000 men and women

are courageously wearing America's uniform in Iraq today. Now they are

endangered there and around the world.

At the heart of this problem is a failure of leadership, not

``followship.'' We have heard from the Secretary of Defense. He was

appalled by what happened, so appalled that he did not bother to read

the report that described the horrific conditions at Abu Ghraib prison

even though he had been aware of the concerns for months; so appalled

he forgot that it was he who decided, apparently on his own, that the

U.S. military would no longer be bound by the Geneva Conventions, an

astounding decision when one considers its implication; so appalled

that his Department has treated those of us who have asked questions

and sought information about the interrogation practices at U.S.

military detention facilities after reports of torture and even

homicide as a nuisance; so appalled that for days he treated this whole

episode as though he could not quite grasp what all the fuss was about.

After all, these are terrorists, and we are fighting a war.

I have known Secretary Rumsfeld for 30 years. I like him. He is

highly intelligent. He has served his country with great devotion. But

I believe that he and the Deputy Secretary bear ultimate responsibility

for this catastrophe.

The post-war chaos in Iraq that has resulted from such miserably poor

planning--and so many people warned them that it was miserably poor

planning--has claimed the lives and limbs of hundreds of America's

troops and civilians and thousands of Iraqis, including many civilians.

It has caused deep divisions between ourselves and the Iraqi people and

Muslims around the world. It has so damaged our image as a nation that

stands for respect for

human rights. This represents a colossal failure of leadership.

For 2 years, we have heard that if you are not with us, you are

against us. Who is with us now? And who was ever with us? The coalition

the President speaks of is a mirage. It is Americans who are dying. It

is Americans who are paying the price--another $25 billion, according

to the President today, and that is only for the next few months.

Another $50 billion at least will be necessary next year just for Iraq.

That is $75 billion we do not have to pay teachers and police and

firefighters and other needs in America.

We have heard how the Secretary of Defense waited for months to tell

the Congress about what was happening in that prison. When the

photographs appeared in the press, he and the National Security

Adviser, the President, everybody else said they were stunned and

shocked and said these were isolated incidents. The only thing they

could have been shocked by was that the facts became public because

they had known about them for a very long time. That is the real

question that should trouble each one of us: Why we thought it was OK

to behave this way. It represents a serious flaw of character, of

morality, of decency, of professionalism, of training. It does not

reflect the great military of our country. It certainly does not

reflect the values of America, and we have to ask the leaders: Why did

you allow this shame to happen? Why did you allow America--America--to

be shamed this way throughout the world?