Mr. Speaker, it is hard to decide where to

start in expressing one's outrage about the revelations, including the

graphic photographs, that our military personnel literally tortured

Iraqi detainees at a prison near Baghdad. It is even harder to know

where the responsibility ends for conduct that obviously violates the

Geneva Convention on care for prisoners of war and Geneva Convention on

the obligations of an occupation authority.

For any decent-minded American, whether he or she supports the war or

opposes the war, to remain silent about this conduct is to be complicit

with this conduct. To refuse to condemn it in the strongest terms

possible, to be reluctant to hold accountable not only those who did

this but also those who permitted it, those who ordered it, those who

created an atmosphere that encouraged it, and those who sent the

signals that everything and anything goes, no matter how far up the

chain of command, it jeopardizes our relationship with the entire Arab

and Muslim world. We should all fear for every American soldier and

civilian in Iraq whose life has been placed in jeopardy by this

irresponsible behavior and, frankly, the irresponsible conduct of this

war.

Before these revelations, it was manifestly clear that our Iraq

policy was in deep, deep trouble. It was already clear that we faced a

widening and deepening resistance. It was already clear that the

administration's characterizations of the resistance as ``dead-

enders,'' ``remnants of Saddam's regime,'' and ``terrorists from the

outside'' did not coincide with reality. These allegations, revealed

first last week by 60 Minutes II, then detailed by investigator

reporter Seymour Hersh of the New Yorker Magazine, and substantiated in

a courageous report by Major General Antonio M. Taguba, may have made

our situation irrevocably untenable.

Think of the predicament now facing U.S. occupation this way: What

would anyone anywhere in the world want to do to someone who had done

such despicable acts to a family member?

The President and other senior administration and Pentagon officials

have been quick to say that only a few participated in these deeds. My

question is who are the few? Over the weekend, the mistreatment was

said to involve only six or seven military police. Now at mid week, we

are told that 17 U.S. soldiers are under investigation for their role

in the abuses, including seven supervising officers who will receive an

official reprimand or admonishment, six enlisted personnel who are

charged with criminal offenses in

March, and another four who are under criminal investigation.

Against this backdrop, General Richard Myers, the chairman of the

Joint Chiefs of Staff, said this past Sunday that he had not read the

Taguba report. It has taken until today for Secretary of Defense Donald

Rumsfeld to make a statement, and according to a Pentagon spokesman, as

late as today, Mr. Rumsfeld had not read the report either.

National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice is the coordinator of our

overall efforts in Iraq. She has been silent as well. Secretary of

State Colin Powell says that the entire military should not be

condemned for the actions of only a few.

No one is condemning the entire military, but once again I ask who

are the few? Does it include those, whoever they are, who told the

military police to ``soften up'' the detainees for interrogation? I

cannot accept, especially when we hear that military intelligence and

private contractors ordered the actions, that these military police

officers just happened to choose acts that are offensive in any

culture, but are especially humiliating to males in the Arab and

Islamic cultures.

And logic leads me to believe the psychological implications were

well understood, and the acts imposed on the detainees were

deliberately selected.

It is fair to ask what else may be going on? Has there been such a

heavy reliance on private military contractors precisely to evade

criminal liability? Have not Iraqis been given new reason to view the

United States war on terrorism as a war on terrorism against them,

their religion, and their culture?

Congress needs to conduct a probe of the incidents and their wider

ramifications. Congress and the American people must answer to

questions that we can be sure that the people of Iraq and all Muslim

lands are asking. While the full weight of punishment should be brought

on all of those implicated, the American people, as a whole, need to

appreciate how much higher the mountain now is that the President must

climb to win the hearts and minds of the Iraqi people and to persuade

the Middle East to follow the model of American democracy. Under his

leadership things continue to go from bad to worse to terrible.