Mr. Speaker, as the chairman of the House delegation to

the NATO Parliamentary Assembly and currently the president of the

assembly, I have frequently had to reassure parliamentarians that the

outrageous and false allegations they had heard about the way detainees

were being treated by the U.S. at our Guantanamo detention facility

were not true. Since I had been part of a small number of Permanent

Select Committee on Intelligence members to visit Guantanamo, actually

the first congressional delegation to visit, since the HPSCI members

and staff have made several such trips and have given oversight to this

interrogation and detention facility, and since I am a former military

intelligence officer, I knew I could conscientiously give such an

assurance.

Now, however, from Abu Ghraib prison, and perhaps from elsewhere, we

have reports, with photographs, graphically telling and showing

outrageous abuses of Iraqi detainees by U.S. military personnel and

possibly by military contractors. The international damage to the

credibility and reputation of our country and our military absolutely

cannot be overstated, especially in the Arab and Islamic communities.

The alleged actions by at least a few members of our military, already

confirmed by very recent disciplinarian action, makes the job being

done by our dedicated and courageous military personnel in Iraq and

Afghanistan just that much harder and much more dangerous. The

extraordinary gravity of this matter, the insensitivity and the

degrading abuse which has apparently been visited upon Iraqi detainees

call for swift and just accountability.

What has allegedly happened is so foreign to our country's principles

and traditions and those of our Armed Forces that these people

conducting or condoning such abuse do not deserve to be called

Americans. If the use of such tactics of physical abuse and sexual

humiliation is not dishonorable conduct, I do not know what is. If

supervisors of such military personnel were inappropriately unaware or

unconcerned about such conduct, then this is a clear case of

dereliction of duty; and this accountability should apply several

levels up the chain of command. If military contractors were involved,

at a minimum the contract with the firm which employed them should be

immediately terminated.

Mr. Speaker, it is hard to imagine a more politically damaging set of

actions, hopefully by just a few individuals, for American and for

coalition efforts to replace the brutal regime of Saddam Hussein and to

win the hearts and minds of the Iraqi people. We must have swift

accountability, just accountability, and a demonstration that the

American people repudiate such conduct and will not let it continue or

happen again.

Mr. Speaker, I include an editorial at this point from this morning's

Omaha World Herald.