Mr. Speaker, I was appalled at the

comments that just preceded me.

John Kerry is a brave man today, and he was a brave man 35 years ago

when he answered his country's call and was wounded on its behalf. And

to hear one say that he came close to giving aid and comfort, of

course, that is part of a phrase that describes treason, is unworthy of

this House. And to couple that sort of wholly unjustified attack on

this brave man because he challenges the President and then to say,

well, let us avoid partisan rhetoric, there are no words to describe

that that would be acceptable under the rules of the House.

I do want to talk about what is going on in Iraq, and I do it with

great sadness. Six months ago if someone had told me that American

military personnel and civilians employed by the United States

Government had engaged in the kind of outrageous dehumanizing behavior

that we have recently seen public, I would have been indignant. I would

have said, look, I disagree with the Iraq policy. I did not vote to go

to war with Iraq, but I think it is unfair to accuse Americans of this.

And we now say that we have to acknowledge that Americans empowered

by the United States Government, not specifically to do that, but they

were there because of American government policy, committed these

outrageous acts. But it is not enough simply to blame a handful of

individuals as the majority tried to do earlier today with a

resolution.

I want to stress again how absolutely wrong it was for the Republican

majority in the House to bring forward today a resolution on this

extraordinarily important question. I am told the President just

apologized, as he should have. He should have done it earlier.

We have got a major set-back in American policy but more importantly,

a revelation that Americans did things in the name of the country that

should not have been contemplated, much less done. And we were only

given an hour to discuss it? And the majority used its automatic

submissive majority of its Members to prevent any amendment, to prevent

any proposal. Many of us believe it is not enough for the military to

investigate itself. They have known about this for some time.

First of all, this is the military's failing. Though the Secretary of

Defense did not do this in this prison, but the

Secretary of Defense and his aids set up this prison which led this to

happening, the inadequate supervision, the whole problem here, this is

one which we must thoroughly investigate. And having the perpetrators

not of the particular acts but of the efforts that led to these acts

investigates themselves is wholly unacceptable.

We were not even allowed because of this automatic submissive

majority to offer an amendment to call for that sort of an

investigation. I want to stress again, what could be more bizarre than

for us to tell the Iraqis that we will teach them how to be democratic,

with a small D.

We in particular are telling the Shiites who are in the majority in

Iraq, use your majority wisely and prudently. Yes, if you are in the

majority you have a right ultimately to make the decision, but please

show respect for minority rights. Please encourage openness.

I only hope, Mr. Speaker, that the Iraqis were not watching the

debate today because if the Shiites were to emulate the House

Republicans in terms of their approach to democracy, then we have very

little chance of achieving what we want.

I only hope that people in the leadership of the Shiite movement in

Iraq do not take the majority leader of this House as an exemplar of

democracy. But it is not simply the inadequate way in which the

military has responded to these outrages, and we might never have known

if these things were not leaked. The military knew for a long time.

They came up here and talked to committees. They misled people when

they asked questions about contractors. They left names off lists. The

way in which they have handled this was outrageous.

I wish it were an exception. I wish this terrible abuse and these

cover ups and this refusal to supervise adequately, I wish it were an

exception. But we also had, within the last week or two, the on-again

off-again appointment of the Iraqi general in Falujah in which, first

of all, we were going to have a war in Falujah. Fortunately, they

decided, let us try to minimize the killing. So they appoint an Iraqi

general to be in charge.

First we were told he is acceptable to everybody. Then it turned out

because of his previous connections to the regime he was unacceptable

and a new general comes in.

We have had error after error after error. We have a lack of

coordination between the State and Defense Departments. I do not think

there has been a major national security operation handled as

incompetently as the way this administration has muddled in Iraq in a

very long time.

Vietnam ultimately became a terrible set of mistakes, but I do not

think in a comparable period Vietnam was as badly handled.

This administration has failed this country in the miserably

incompetent way it has handled Iraq.