Yesterday, the Senate Armed Services Committee held two

hearings to consider the reports by General Fay and General Jones and

the report by former Defense Secretary Schlesinger about the Abu Ghraib

prison debacle.

The abuses at Abu Ghraib are just one part of a much larger failure,

for which our soldiers have been paying a high price since day one.

Because of the Bush administration's arrogant ideological incompetence

and its bizarre ``mission accomplished'' mentality, our troops and our

intelligence officers and our diplomats had neither the resources nor

the guidance needed to deal with the worsening conditions that steadily

began to overwhelm them and continue to do so.

On issue after issue in Iraq, the administration has failed the basic

test of competence.

Before the war, the administration mishandled the intelligence,

causing great damage to U.S. respect in the world, making the war on

terrorism far harder to win. It is preposterous for the administration

to pretend that the war in Iraq has made America safer. No President in

America's history has done more damage to our country and our security

than President Bush.

The American people know where the buck stops.

The administration bungled prewar diplomacy on Iraq, leaving us

isolated and unable to obtain real allied support.

The administration failed to consider the possibility that the

liberation of Iraq might not be the cakewalk they predicted. They

failed to consider the possibility that their preoccupation with Iraq

could undo much of our achievement in Afghanistan and give the al-Qaida

terrorists time to regroup and plan murderous new assaults.

Far too many of our soldiers were not adequately trained for their

mission in Iraq and they did not have adequate equipment for their

missions either.

The administration failed to send enough troops to do the job of

keeping the peace. They disbanded the Iraqi army, and they are

struggling now to recreate it.

The administration's failures have also put a huge strain on the Army

and our Reserve Forces and imposed great hardships on the families of

our soldiers.

The number of insurgents in Iraq has gone up. The number of brutal

attacks has gone up, and so have the casualties.

When President Bush recklessly declared ``mission accomplished,'' the

civilian leaders in the Department of Defense took him seriously and

left our Armed Forces in Iraq underprepared, understaffed, and underled

for the mission that was only just beginning.

President Bush has stated that the war in Iraq was a catastrophic

success. He is half right--the war has been a catastrophe.

The war has been a catastrophe for our soldiers, who were foolishly

sent to war with no plan--no plan--to win the peace.

The war has been a catastrophe for their loved ones.

The war has been a catastrophe for our Nation's standing in the world

and for the war on terror. As I have said, it has distracted us from

the real threat of al-Qaida in Afghanistan and elsewhere, made the war

against terrorism far harder to win, and made America more hated in the

world than at any other time in our history.

Nothing I have said detracts from the extraordinary heroism of our

soldiers. They have responded to their mission in Iraq with immense

courage and dedication. But their outstanding service does not and

cannot excuse the incompetence of their civilian leaders.

That incompetence was on vivid display again yesterday, in the Armed

Services Committee, where we heard testimony on the report by General

Jones and General Fay about Iraq. Their findings were chilling.

Their report states point blank that the Pentagon expected our

troops, under General Sanchez, to provide stability and support for the

Coalition Provisional Authority ``in a relatively nonhostile

environment'' in Iraq. Those are the exact words of the report--``a

relatively nonhostile environment.''

That description is no surprise. The administration had been doing

its best to convince the American people that the war would be easy.

In February 2003, Secretary Rumsfeld told troops that the war ``could

last, you know, 6 days, 6 weeks, I doubt 6 months.'' As Secretary

Rumsfeld well knows, it has now been three times as long as that, with

no end in sight.

In March 2003, Vice President Cheney said we would ``be greeted as

liberators'' and dismissed out of hand any suggestion that we would be

viewed as conquerors in a long, bloody occupation.

Before the war, the Pentagon flagrantly ignored the postwar planning

carried out by the State Department in its ``Future of Iraq'' project.

The civilian leaders at the Defense Department were dismissive of any

opposing view. They were convinced that the war would be easy, cheap,

and fast.

They ridiculed General Shinseki, then Chief of Staff of the Army, and

Larry Lindsey, formerly President Bush's top economic advisor, who said

that a successful war in Iraq would require hundreds of thousands of

soldiers, and hundreds of billions of dollars.

They put their own ideology above practical military planning, and we

continue to see the catastrophic results today.

Simply put, the civilians at the Pentagon did not anticipate or

prepare for the insurgent fighting that occurred, despite the prewar

warnings from military leaders.

Even after the shameful failure at Abu Ghraib came to light, the

administration continued to pour out statements that were completely at

odds with the facts.

On May 7 this year, Secretary Rumsfeld testified before the Armed

Services Committees of both Houses of Congress. He told Senators that

``a small number of the U.S. military'' had perpetuated the abuses. He

told the House that ``a few members of the U.S. military were

responsible.'' A week later, President Bush tried to minimize the

scandal by saying it involved ``disgraceful conduct by a few American

troops.''

But as we now know, it wasn't just a few bad apples at Abu Ghraib.

The Fay Report found 54 military intelligence, military police,

medics, and civilian contractors who had ``some degree of

responsibility or complicity in the abuses that occurred at Abu Ghraib.

Leaders in key positions failed to properly supervise the interrogation

operations at the prison.''

The Fay Report identified not just individual failures but systemic

failures, including: ``inadequate interrogation doctrine and training,

an acute shortage of MP and MI soldiers, the lack of clear lines of

responsibility between the MP and MI chains of command, the lack of

clear interrogation policy for the Iraq Campaign.''

The Schlesinger Report found that military leaders in and out of Iraq

and civilian leaders in the Department of Defense ``failed in their

duties and that such failures contributed directly or indirectly to

detainee abuse.'' The report faults the Secretary of Defense and the

Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff for failing to ``set in motion

the development of a more effective alternative course of action.''

Plainly, senior leaders did not do what was necessary to prevent these

abuses.

Secretary Rumsfeld told the Armed Services committee that the abuses

were brought to light by Specialist Joseph Darby in January 2004, and

the military chain of command ``acted promptly on learning of those

abuses.''

This claim, too, is false. Senior leaders had ample warning that

these abuses were occurring long before January 2004.

General Jones' report found that indications and warnings had

surfaced at General Sanchez's level ``that additional oversight and

corrective actions were needed in the handling of detainees,''

including at Abu Ghraib.

The report pointed to many specific warnings from within the Army

about clear problems that were ignored by the Pentagon's civilian

leadership. It cited an incident in which a detainee was abused at Camp

Cropper after a prison riot. It cited investigations by the Army's

Criminal Investigative Division into incidents of abuse and

disciplining soldiers. It cited the death of a CIA detainee at Abu

Ghraib. It cited the totally inadequate filing system for tracking

detainees, which consisted of a hodge-podge of computers and filing

boxes.

The civilian leaders at the Pentagon also had ample warnings from

outside the Army, which they also ignored. The International Committee

of the Red Cross reported on abuses in the prisons as early as May

2003, soon after the fall of Baghdad. During a visit to Abu Ghraib 5

months later, in October 2003, Red Cross inspectors were so upset by

what they found that they halted their visit and demanded an immediate

explanation from U.S. military authorities. Yet the worst abuses at the

prison occurred over the next 3 months, from October to December of

that year.

Clearly, Secretary Rumsfeld misled the Congress and the American

people when he said that the leadership had

acted swiftly to address the abuses, when in fact, they allowed abuses

to continue and allowed the situation to fester. They acted only when

the public disclosure of the abuses in the press made it impossible for

their cover-up to continue.

The administration then attempted to minimize the abuses at Abu

Ghraib as part of its overall strategy to bury any bad new from Iraq

and hide its incompetence, or worse, from the American people. But as

these reports show, the catastrophe is far too great to be wished away

with political spin.

The Jones-Fay report states very clearly that ``the military police

and military intelligence units at Abu Ghraib were severely

underresourced.''

The report says that a failure to distinguish between Iraq and other

theaters of operation led to ``confusion'' about which particular

interrogation techniques were authorized in Iraq.

It says, ``The intelligence structure was under-manned,

underequipped, and inappropriately organized for counter-insurgency

operations.''

What the report is saying, put in plain language, is that the

operation was botched--totally botched.

We know from General Taguba's report that few, if any, of the

military police assigned to Abu Ghraib were trained on how to run a

prison, or even on the basic requirements of the Geneva Conventions.

Yesterday, the generals told us that additional missions had

overwhelmed General Sanchez's headquarters, leaving them unable to

manage the growing crises at Abu Ghraib and unable to respond to the

many warning signs from the Red Cross.

We heard over and over again about the impossible strains imposed on

General Sanchez and his headquarters, because he was suddenly forced to

take on two huge missions in Iraq--supporting the Coalition Provisional

Authority and beginning the reconstruction--in addition to fighting a

growing insurgency.

The Jones-Fay report says that General Sanchez was missing two-thirds

of the personnel needed for his own command in Iraq. It says ``of the

1,400 personnel required, the [Fifth] Corps staff transitioned to only

495, or roughly a third, of the manning requirements.'' This was barely

enough to fight the war, and far too few to rebuild a country or

supervise the detention system.

The obvious basic questions are who put our military forces in this

untenable position? Who decided that the war would be short, cheap, and

easy? Who decided that the war was over and that we needed to start

rebuilding Iraq? Who decided to play ``Mission Accomplished?''

The problems at Abu Ghraib are just symptoms of these larger

failures. We sent our troops into battle without enough life-saving

body armor and armor for their humvees on patrol. Those shortages were

allowed to last for over a year, while our casualties continued to

mount.

We had far too few troops in place to prevent the looting of Baghdad

and many other parts of the country.

Huge ammunition depots went unguarded, and insurgents kept getting

materials and bombs to use against our troops.

We disbanded the Iraqi military, at one time the fourth largest

military in the world, only to begin training a new one from scratch

when the blunder was finally admitted.

In his report, General Jones gave us a definition of a leadership

failure: where ``leaders did not take charge, failed to provide

appropriate guidance'', ``failed to accept responsibility or apply good

judgment''. By this standard, and on this record, President Bush and

his administration are clearly guilty of leadership failure.

Despite these colossal failures of leadership and this gross

incompetence, no one has been held accountable.

The military holds its soldiers accountable for leadership failures.

A few weeks ago, the Navy fired the captain of the USS John F. Kennedy

aircraft carrier for running over a small boat in the Persian Gulf. The

Navy didn't hide incompetence and gloss it over. It responded

decisively and plainly stated that it had ``lost confidence'' in the

captain's ability to operate the carrier safely. He was the eleventh

commanding officer of the Navy to be fired this year alone. The Navy

fired 14 commanding officers in 2003.

In February 2004, the Commanding Officer of the frigate USS Samuel B

Roberts was fired for a ``loss of confidence,'' after he spent a night

off the ship during a port visit to Ecuador.

In October 2003, the Commanding Officer of an EA-6B Prowler Aircraft

Squadron lost his job after one of his jets skidded off a runway. The

Navy cited a ``loss of confidence'' when they made the decision to

dismiss him.

In December 2003 and January 2004, Commanding Officers of the

submarine, Jimmy Carter and the frigate USS Gary were fired, both for

``loss of confidence.''

For military officers in the Navy, the message is clear--if you fail,

you're fired. The message to the civilian leadership in this

administration is equally clear--if you fail there will be no

consequences and no accountability, even if 1,000 American lives are

lost.

It is time for the Department of Defense run a tighter ship at all

levels of command, including the civilian leadership. The civilian

leaders at the Pentagon should be held at least to the same standard of

accountability that military officers in the Navy are held to.

Obviously, it is different to place overall blame on our military

leaders when their only fault may well be that they couldn't talk their

arrogant civilian leaders out of a flawed plan for Iraq.

But someone must be held accountable for the massive failures in

Iraq. The buck has to stop somewhere!

Civilian control of the military is one of the great cornerstones of

our democracy. But what if the civilian leaders don't know what they're

doing, and mindlessly order our troops into battle unprepared?

Alfred Lord Tennyson said it well in those lines in his famous poem,

``Charge of the Light Brigade'':

This is what the administration has done to our troops in Iraq, and

if Tennyson were writing today, he might well call his poem, ``The

Charge of the Bush Brigade.''

Clearly, there must be accountability for this breathtaking

incompetence, which has resulted in the death of over a thousand

American soldiers so far, put more in daily danger, and weakened

America's national security.

Yesterday, at the Armed Services Committee, former Defense Secretary

Harold Brown described the key to accountability:

This administration has had its chance--and it failed the basic test

of competence. If failed to deploy adequate forces in Iraq to win the

peace. It failed at Abu Ghraib. It failed in granting sweetheart deals

to Halliburton. It has failed the loss of confidence test, the basic

test of Presidential leadership.

The President seeks re-election based on his ability to fight the war

on terror.

The administration has lost confidence of the so-called ``coalition

of the willing.'' Country after country is withdrawing troops, leaving

America responsible for 90 percent of all the troops on the ground and

90 percent of all casualties.

On November 2d, the American people will decide, whether a majority

of the country have lost confidence in the President's leadership

because of his failures in Iraq and his failures on a wide range of

immense important domestic issues as well. There can only be one

answer--America needs new leadership. As I have said before, the only

thing America has to fear is 4 more years of George Bush.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.