Mr. President, I would like to take a

few minutes to discuss the vote that is coming up this afternoon, the

resolution about the Iraqi prisoner abuse scandal.

No. 1, I would like to compliment Majority Leader Frist and Senator

Daschle for bringing this matter up, and the committees and those who

are

involved in drafting the resolution, and allowing it to come to the

floor. I think it is important for the Senate to be on record; but,

more importantly, that this not just be used or seen as an opportunity

for politicians to pile on and talk about the story that is hard to

watch or view, that we are all on the right side here in making sure

the world understands we condemn this, and it is more about us

protecting ourselves politically. I think it is a symbolic gesture, but

much of democracy is symbolism: The idea that an elected body--some say

the most prestigious deliberative body in the world, and I can

understand why people would say that about the Senate--would take some

of its time to have a vote on something that goes to the core of who we

are as a people.

As I travel around and listen to constituents about this prisoner

abuse scandal, a couple of points are reflected back to me.

No. 1, the people there are probably not nice people; they are

criminals; maybe terrorists; that other people do worse; let us not be

so hard on ourselves; and people in a war environment where there is

much stress sometimes overreact. That is all true. But that is not the

point. The point is if we use as a standard to govern ourselves the

shortcomings of a dictatorship, then the big loser is us.

I spoke at a graduation this weekend. I said never use the standard

of someone else's failures to be your benchmark as to how you would

like to live your life.

We know how bad people treat good people and others. We have seen it

in history for thousands of years. It was a real part of Saddam

Hussein's regime.

The question is, Can we prove to the world and ourselves that good

people treat bad people differently? Not only can we, I think we must.

There are a lot of Iraqis who are probably not shocked by this

prisoner abuse scandal nearly as much as we are. In their world, this

is pretty much the way you do business. A lot worse happened in that

prison under Saddam Hussein. But what happened there that we know about

so far is very hard for Americans to understand and digest. That is the

good thing. The fact a lot of Iraqis are willing to accept that this is

usual is not a good thing.

What will have to occur for Iraq to make it as a functioning

democracy is people are going to have to change what to expect from

their leaders and their government and those in authority.

My question to our Nation is, If we show anything short of disgust

and condemnation, would we not be reinforcing to those already

disheartened Iraqis that you should not have high expectations? Even

the Americans, whom we have all heard about and who tout themselves as

the good guy, understand how these things can happen.

This resolution is a small step forward to prove to the Iraqi people

and others that you should have high expectations of those who are in

your government--those who are given the authority to imprison, to make

arrests and detain. If you start having those high expectations, you

will be amazed at how things in Iraq change for the better.

I have been waiting for a demonstration to occur in Iraq against the

activities that led to the death of the four contractors. I am fully

aware if you join us to stabilize Iraq, to be a judge, or a prosecutor,

or a police chief or the army--any symbol of authority that would bring

about a transfer of democracy in Iraq--the insurgents are likely to

come after you and your family.

It is easy for us to talk about demonstrating and showing disgust

when we are not threatened. But in the history of our Nation, people

have put their lives at risk to make us better. In my lifetime, people

such as Dr. Martin Luther King risked their lives to try to make life

better for us all. During the civil rights demonstrations of the 1950s

and 1960s, the photos of police dogs attacking African-American men and

women shocked us all and it made what segregation is about real.

I hope these photos will shock us and make us understand when we fail

as a people, when our institutions fail, it is OK to apologize. It

doesn't make you smaller; it actually makes you larger. It is OK to

say, I am sorry. There is a moral imperative, that when we assess

accountability we do not take anybody off the list because of their

rank or their status.

This resolution today is a small step forward. There will be many

more steps to be taken to overcome this prisoner abuse scandal and to

transform Iraq into a functioning democracy. But there are voices in

our country which are vilifying and undercutting the effort.

I appeared on a show this Sunday with former NATO Commander General

Wesley Clark, a man who served his country in a variety of roles and

honorably served in Vietnam and was wounded. But he said something that

disturbed me. It took a while for me to realize the depth of the

statement. When asked, Will Iraq be democratic, or the effort to

transform Iraq be successful, he said, Less than 50. I will give 2-to-1

odds that this operation ends in a catastrophe, for a lack of a better

word paraphrasing him. It is not good, I believe, to bet against

ourselves, or to put 2-to-1 odds on the ending. People will take that

wrong and think they are winning when they are really not. Whether Iraq

becomes a functioning democracy or something akin to it is not only

possible, it is a must.

There will never be a Mideast without turmoil and hatred until some

countries in that region embrace the idea that you can worship God more

than one way, that there is a role for women, a meaningful role for

women, and democracy ensures the two things I have mentioned. All

people can participate and one's faith is expressed in many ways in a

democracy. Not only is Iraq's transformation to a democracy a

worthwhile objective, I think we have a moral imperative to accomplish

that mission because it goes to the sense of whether we will ever win

the war on terror. For every democracy that is formed in the Mideast,

there is one less place for Osama bin Laden and his henchmen to be able

to thrive; they know that. That is why they are fighting so hard and so

fiercely. The people indigenous to Iraq who do not want a democracy

understand their past association with Saddam Hussein will not be

rewarded. They want it their way and no other way. They use this

opportunity to attack us and run America and other people out as a way

to create a vacuum which they will fill.

If that occurs and we fail in Iraq, the big loser will be the next

generation of freedom-loving people all over the world. The

international community is not only essential to transforming Iraq, it

must take an active part sooner rather than later.

History tells us sometimes the international community is more

worried about appeasing the problem than solving the problem. Winston

Churchill virtually stood alone because so many people before him

believed Hitler would be OK if you gave him just one more country.

People like Hitler are never OK with just a little more. They want all

you have and then some.

Osama bin Laden will never be appeased by having part of Iraq or all

of it. People who think the way he does cannot be dealt with in terms

that we understand and live by. That is not to say we need to throw our

law and our values overboard. We need to understand the only thing that

will control the Osama bin Ladens of the world is the same thing that

controlled the Hitlers of the world: Good men and women from diverse

backgrounds from all over the world coming together and saying, We will

fight you. We will fight for freedom of religion, diversity in life. If

you want to fight, that is the only way this can be resolved, you will

get a fight.

The international community needs to help us yesterday. President

Bush is right: a democratic Iraq is necessary to transform the Middle

East as a starting point. President Bush is right: Iraq is a frontline

effort in the war on terror. It is a place in the past where terrorists

felt at home; a place in the past with a leader, Saddam Hussein, who

fueled money to the Middle East to reward those who wanted to destroy

the State of Israel and prevent a two-state solution between Palestine

and Israel.

This resolution could not come at a better time. But it is only a

small first step of many more steps to come. My bet is that it is not 2

to 1, it is 100 percent; that if Americans can come together and stop

the partisan fighting over this war, having differences of opinion is

absolutely appropriate, and the only way a free people can live.

The Iraqi prison abuse scandal is an opportunity for America to come

together. Regardless of whether you are Republican or Democrat, we see

this problem the same. If we work together, we can win. We will work, I

am 100-percent certain of that. The only person who can defeat us is

ourselves.