

Now, many of the men and women and teenagers held in this prison, actually, the infamous prison which was known as a torture center for Saddam Hussein, they were picked up in random sweeps and at highway checkpoints.

People were held for months on little or no evidence, with no charges, no change at appeal, and now, it seems, in addition to that potentially widespread injustice, they may have been abused or even tortured.

The Department of Defense is investigating these charges, but he oversight quite frankly must be broader and the questions that are asked must be more sweeping. Congress absolutely has to exercise its oversight authority through a full scale investigation, a Congressional investigation.

Part of this examination also has to look at private contractors, some of whom will be running these prisons and some of whom are allegedly involved in these terrible acts. Human Rights Watch and other organizations have widely asked about the role of private contractors who seem to be operating entirely outside the boundaries of authority in a complete legal vacuum. They are exempt from prosecution by Iraqi courts. They are beyond the military chain of command and its court-martial authority, and they are outside the range of the United States courts.

This is one more consequence of turning over so much power and so much money to private contractors. This is one more example of a foreign policy and a military policy gone wrong. The United States has turned this prison especially, Abu Ghraib into a house of horrors. That failure is a metaphor for a foreign policy that has gone absolutely and tragically wrong. Our Nation is perceived in many circles as waging war on Islam. The pictures in the world's newspapers will only compound and confirm that perception. Those photographs build on an image of a Nation that ignores the United Nations, when it chooses to, of course, and turns to it when it gets in trouble.

They add to a portrait of a country that preaches about human rights but fails to uphold them. The pictures are just one more piece of evidence that this administration led our Nation to war without really a plan for its aftermath. And that utter failure, as I said, "mistake" is far too soft a word.

This policy has contributed to more than 500 American deaths since, mind you, since President Bush landed on that aircraft carrier and stood underneath that banner proclaiming "Mission accomplished."

Exactly what mission have we accomplished? We have not found any weapons of mass destruction, but we have seriously damaged our international credibility. We have not established any semblance of stability or safety in Iraq, although the deadline for the supposed Iraqi takeover of authority is just a month away.

We have not promoted the cause of democracy in the Middle East or anywhere else, but we have undermined the rule of international law.

□ 2000

We have not built a strong network of friends and allies to advance our joint goals, but we have squandered the enormous goodwill that the world stretched out to us in 2001. Ultimately, we have not made the world or ourselves safer. The policies of the Bush administration have made the world a far more dangerous place.

Tomorrow, the State Department issues its annual report on U.S. efforts to support human rights and democracy across the globe. Just what is this report going to say about the Bush administration's failures in Iraq and its efforts to overthrow democracy in Haiti? Just what is this report going to say about the abuse of individuals and organizations?

#### ADEQUATE PROTECTION FOR OUR TROOPS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. COLE). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. STRICKLAND) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. STRICKLAND. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate being recognized.

Mr. Speaker, as my friend, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. BROWN), said earlier, in a press conference recently on the 13th, the President was asked if he could identify any mistakes he may have made, and he was unable to do so.

I can tell him a mistake that he and his administration has made. They sent our young soldiers into harm's way when the war in Iraq began without adequate body armor. That is the truth. They cannot escape that fact. There were soldiers who were placed in harm's way without having the protection of this basic equipment.

The war began in March. I have written Secretary Rumsfeld over the last year two letters asking him to explain to me and to the American people why our soldiers were placed in harm's way without this protection.

This body armor that I am talking about became available, I think, for the first time in 1998. It is called the "interceptive vest." It is made of Kevlar with ceramic plates in both the front and the back. It is so effective that it can stop an AK-47 bullet, and it has been credited with saving the lives of many of our soldiers who had them and could use them.

When we went into Iraq, after literally months during which we could have prepared to have had adequate equipment for our troops, we sent our soldiers into battle without this protection; and Mr. Speaker, it took Mr. Rumsfeld and the Pentagon, and, yeah, the buck stops in the Oval Office, the President, one full year from March when the war began until March of this year before they were able to send me

a letter informing me that, at last, all of our troops were equipped with this body armor.

I asked how many young men or middle-age Reservists and Guardsmen may have lost their lives needlessly simply because this administration did not provide them with this basic protection. It is a question that I think needs to be analyzed and answered.

There is a continuing problem in the war zone. As I stand here in the Chamber of the people's House tonight, there are American soldiers in Iraq, in various cities in Iraq, who are using vehicles without proper armor. There is one company that the Pentagon has a contract with to provide up-armored Humvees for our military personnel. It is located in Fairfield, Ohio. It is called O'Gara-Hess and Eisenhardt. It is the company that has the ability and the contract with the Pentagon to produce these vehicles which provide a high degree of protection when our soldiers may drive over a roadside bomb, for example; and yet the Pentagon is only contracting for 300 of these up-armored Humvees per month, although thousands are needed in Iraq.

The company tells me that they are capable by November, if not sooner, of producing some 500 of these Humvees per month. What that means is if the President and the Secretary of Defense and those who make decisions regarding this matter at the Pentagon were willing to do so, they could have these up-armored vehicles in Iraq so that our troops would be protected much more quickly than they are willing to do.

I do not understand this. I simply do not understand why the President does not call Secretary Rumsfeld up and say, listen, there are reports that our troops need up-armored Humvees; I want this problem solved as quickly as possible. Do everything necessary; move heaven and Earth but get this problem solved.

A young West Point graduate from my district called me a few weeks ago. He had returned after spending 14 months in Iraq; and he said, Congressman, the Explorer you drive around is more armored and offers better protection than did the Humvee that I drove around the streets of Baghdad.

It troubles me that those of us who serve here in this Chamber and the President, who is the Commander in Chief, would allow this situation to continue when they can do something about it.

So if the President cannot think of any mistake he has made, I would offer this mistake. I would say to the President, you should not have sent our soldiers into battle without body armor, and you should not have our soldiers over there tonight without up-armored Humvees to provide them adequate protection.