

administration is not supporting our troops. But, Mr. Speaker, when are congressional Republicans going to realize that President Bush and Vice President CHENEY and Secretary Rumsfeld simply cannot conduct this war, they do not know how?

How many more months should we sit by silently enduring the kind of month that we had in April? How many more months can we ignore the fact that the minuscule amount of international support we once had in Iraq continues to shrink? How many more months are we supposed to sit by silently and not question the Bush administration on why it did not develop a post-Saddam plan before going to war?

It is time that someone is held accountable in this administration, and it is time for the Secretary of Defense, Donald Rumsfeld, to resign.

Mr. Speaker, on the issue of Iraq, Republicans here in the House of Representatives stand by obediently, wrapping themselves in the American flag, but refusing to ever question any action taken by the Bush administration. Now with the unveiling of these deplorable pictures of abuse from Iraq, House Republicans once again obediently followed their leader, President Bush.

Today, House Democrats called on this House to oversee the Bush administration and investigate these awful abuses. In the other Chamber, Secretary Rumsfeld is scheduled to testify tomorrow on his role in the abuses committed by a few American interrogators. I would imagine my colleagues over in the other Chamber will ask Secretary Rumsfeld why he never mentioned these pictures during a visit to Capitol Hill last week, hours before they would appear on the CBS News Magazine.

I would imagine my colleagues over in the other Chamber will ask Secretary Rumsfeld why he never bothered to read the Taguba report, even though it had been on his desk for more than a month before these outrageous instances of abuse finally came to light on CBS news.

Mr. Speaker, these are valid questions; and they should not only be asked in the U.S. Senate. It is time congressional House Republicans take their oversight responsibilities seriously and call on Secretary Rumsfeld to come over here to the House and answer these questions.

Earlier this week, when the Republican majority leader, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. DELAY), was asked whether or not he called for an investigation into the abuse of prisoners in Iraq, the gentleman responded, "A full-fledged investigation, that is like saying we need hearings on every case of police brutality, and I do not think they are warranted."

Well, Mr. Speaker, for the majority leader to minimize the abuses committed in Iraq does nothing to help our troops in Iraq. The Congress must show the Arab world that it takes this issue

seriously, so we can save the lives of American troops in the future.

Mr. Speaker, if we truly want to support our troops in combat, the U.S. House of Representatives must oversee actions of the Bush administration. Failing that, in my opinion, we are failing our troops.

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

(Mr. HOEKSTRA addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

HONORING THE GREATEST GENERATION

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

Mr. SHIMKUS. Mr. Speaker, tomorrow, I have a special honor. I get to present the World War II medals that my uncle earned in the war to him. He is what Tom Brokaw has called part of the Greatest Generation. In fact, last week we opened the World War II Memorial, with a formal ceremony coming Memorial Day weekend.

Since we are in a challenging world environment, many people are saying today that we are seeing the next Greatest Generation.

□ 1600

The services are reporting that they are meeting their recruiting goals. Imagine that. In an environment where we are at war, soldiers are dying, recruitment levels are being met. Truly, we are seeing a revival of patriotism and, very possibly, another "greatest generation."

However, that is not without cost, and today I am here to mention five individuals from my district who have lost their lives in service to their country, not all in Iraq, as we will come to see.

Each of these people gave their lives in pursuit of freedom and democracy. They should be recognized for their sacrifices.

Corporal Foster Jostes was a 21-year-old from Albion, Illinois who served as an Army Corporal in the 1st Battalion, 1st Cavalry Division from Fort Hood, Texas. He was a 2000 graduate of Edwards County High School, after which he joined the National Guard at age 17. He had only been in Iraq for about a week when military personnel say his Humvee was hit by a rocket-propelled grenade, killing Jostes and the driver, in a suburb of Baghdad.

Lance Corporal Torrey Stoffel-Gray was a 19-year-old Marine from Patoka, Illinois. Patoka is a rural town in my district with around 630 people. At 16, Lance Corporal Stoffel-Gray left Patoka to enter Lincoln Challenge, a military-style alternative school at Rantoul, Illinois. Many friends and

family say that Lincoln Challenge changed his life and helped him find his way. This young man was recently killed in action in Iraq when his convoy was struck by a rocket-propelled grenade and gunfire in the Al Anbar Province.

Gary Weston was a 52-year-old from Vienna, Illinois. He was employed by DynCorp International, serving with the United Nations as international police officers. He and other officers were fired upon by a Jordanian police officer for unknown reasons. Two fellow workers were killed in the resulting fire fight. Gary was flown to a hospital after receiving several gunshot wounds. He later died from complications from the gunshot wounds. His wife Nina Weston was there by her husband's side.

Kim Bigley was a 47-year-old who lived most of her life in southern and Southwestern Illinois. She was an employee of DynCorp International, which was serving with the United Nations as an international police officer and was a former warden at the Shawnee Correctional Center. She had just completed her first day of job orientation when she was killed. Along with Mr. Weston, Kim was fired upon by a Jordanian police officer for unknown reasons and was killed as a result of the fire fight.

Captain John Tipton was a 32-year-old who grew up in Granite City, Illinois. He died recently in an explosion during combat in the Al Anbar Province in Iraq. The province, west of Baghdad, and is one of the most hostile regions in Iraq. He was stationed at Fort Riley, Kansas with his wife, Susie Tipton of Collinsville and their two children: Austin, 4 and Kaitlyn, 2. He was commander of Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 16th Infantry, 1st Brigade, 1st Infantry Division out of Fort Riley, Kansas.

I cannot say enough about these men and women who are putting their lives on the line every day in the hopes of making a difference in far-away lands. They made the ultimate sacrifice and should never be taken for granted. My thoughts and prayers go out to all of the troops, their families and their loved ones.

Truly, we are seeing the next "greatest generation." May God bless our troops and may God bless America.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. COLE). Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WOOLSEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. WOOLSEY addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

EXCHANGE OF SPECIAL ORDER TIME

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to take the time of the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WOOLSEY).

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Maryland?

There was no objection.

TIME TO HOLD PENTAGON LEADERSHIP ACCOUNTABLE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. VAN HOLLEN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Mr. Speaker, we are at a critical juncture. The horrible photographs of abused and humiliated Iraqi prisoners being beamed around the world have seriously wounded our already tattered credibility in Iraq, the Middle East, and around the world. The damage done to our effort to win the hearts of the Iraqi people may be irreversible, but we owe it to the 130,000 American troops putting their lives on the line every day in Iraq to show the world that America will not tolerate such abuse. We must take strong action to demonstrate that we understand the severity of the problem and blunt the damage to our image and reputation around the world. Failure to send a strong signal will further strengthen the hand of al Qaeda and the terrorist groups who will use these photographs to bolster recruits and promote their cause.

It is easy to try and dismiss the abuse as the acts of a few bad apples acting alone. But the fact that a situation developed where such abuse could occur in a facility under the total control of the United States represents a failure of leadership at the highest levels of the Pentagon. It is inexcusable that the Secretary of Defense and the top civilian leadership of the Pentagon did not foresee the possibility of such abuses happening and take steps to prevent it. The fact that some are now trying to brush aside these abuses on the grounds that sometimes terrible things happen to prisoners of war only reinforces the fact that such abuses were foreseeable and could have been prevented.

Before the war began, we know that experts on Iraq warned that the toughest fight would not be the military conquest over the forces of Saddam Hussein, but the battle to win the peace. A fundamental miscalculation of our civilian leadership was their belief that removal of the hated Saddam would automatically leave the Iraqi people to embrace the United States. And the Bush administration has since made many miscalculations that have increased the number of Iraqis who view us as occupiers, including the continued detention of many Iraqis without proof of wrongdoing.

In a battle where we knew that the greatest challenge was to win the hearts and minds of the Iraqi people, political considerations are often more important than military calculations. Making sure those considerations are taken into account is the responsibility of the President and his leader-

ship team. It should have been obvious to everybody that the negative fallout from any hint of abuse of Iraqi prisoners would be a huge setback to our efforts throughout the Middle East.

Secretary Rumsfeld should have ensured that the procedures were in place to better screen the Iraqis being thrown into prison and taken extra precautions to ensure the physical well-being of those who were detained. Instead, just as the Bush administration has ignored the international concerns about prisoners held at Guantanamo Bay, it has shown a cavalier attitude when international human rights groups and Iraqis raised issues about the treatment of Iraqi prisoners.

We will be learning more about the facts in the days ahead, but the lawyers representing the American soldiers who were directly involved have already warned that these prosecutions will "open up a can of worms" that will show that these abusive practices were not only tolerated, but encouraged by some of their superiors as a useful part of interrogation.

Nothing, nothing could be more damaging to U.S. credibility in Iraq than to have Iraqis abused by Americans in the same Abu Ghraib Prison where Saddam tortured prisoners. The awful symbolism is devastating to U.S. efforts around the world, and reports that Iraqi women may have been subject to sexual abuse will further inflame the problem. It is hard to think of a more serious blow to our international reputation as we seek to promote human rights, freedom, and democracy in Iraq, Afghanistan, and the Middle East.

The tragedy, the real tragedy is that the heroic efforts of our soldiers who have performed so courageously in Iraq have now been compromised by the negligence of the Secretary of Defense and the Pentagon civilian leadership. Throughout the war, President Bush has used the rhetoric of leadership, but has failed to hold leaders in his administration accountable for bad decisions and serious omissions. Indeed, those who did raise prescient questions about the true costs and required troop levels were publicly rebuked, while those who have been consistently wrong in their predictions have received no sanction.

This is a critical moment. The world is watching. If we do not want al Qaeda and our enemies to gain an even bigger public relations victory than they already have, the President must show the world that America will not stand for such abuse. The President was right to go on Arabic-speaking television stations in the Middle East to express his outrage at the abuses that occurred and make it clear that they are unacceptable to the American people, but that is not enough to repair the severe damage that has been done. We must take additional steps and, Mr. Speaker, I will include in the RECORD five additional steps that we must take to blunt the damage that has been done as a result of this.

First, it is not enough for the President to allow a few very bad apples to shoulder the

entire blame for actions that have seriously undermined our efforts in Iraq and around the world. Leadership begins at the top and these abuses are the result of failed leadership. Even if Secretary Rumsfeld had no actual notice of prisoner abuse, Secretary Rumsfeld should have taken steps to ensure the safety of Iraqi prisoners. But Secretary Rumsfeld was on notice. He and his deputies at the Pentagon had access to numerous reports of alleged prisoner abuse and did nothing. That failure to act has now undercut the brave efforts of our men and women in Iraq; their failure to act has violated the trust of our soldiers and the trust of the American people. The President owes it to our troops and the American people to act quickly to remove those individuals who should have acted early to prevent this debacle.

Second, the Administration must stop being so contemptuous of international law and norms and immediately grant an independent third party, such as the International Committee for the Red Cross, full and unimpeded access to all the prisoners being detained in Iraq. It has become fashionable in this Administration to argue that the United States should no longer be constrained by international law and norms. Indeed, Secretary Rumsfeld overrode previous U.S. practice in the handling of detainees overseas when he ruled that the U.S. would no longer be bound by the Geneva Conventions. That decision and other statements by the Secretary sent exactly the wrong signal. At a time when both U.S. values and U.S. foreign policy interests demanded tight procedures to prevent abuse of prisoners, Secretary Rumsfeld discarded the rules that had been in place. The result was sadly predictable and avoidable. We must now work to repair our credibility by providing the appropriate international agencies total access to prisoners being held.

Third, the Congress must take its constitutional responsibilities seriously. Formal congressional oversight by the relevant committees of this House has been virtually nonexistent regarding the conduct of the war in Iraq. Congress has a constitutional responsibility to oversee the actions of the Executive Branch and to hold it accountable. Yet, unfortunately, especially when it comes to Iraq, the House leadership gets its talking points straight from the White House. It has abdicated its institutional responsibilities as a separate branch of government and become a rubber-stamp for Administration policy. It is time for this House to fulfill its duty to our troops and the American people by putting aside short term election year politics and taking its responsibilities seriously.

Fourth, we should immediately close the Abu Ghraib prison. It remains a symbol of the brutal repression under Saddam's regime. Regional experts had previously recommended against using that hated facility to hold Iraqi prisoners because of the terrible message it sent to the Iraqi people. The Administration ignored their advice. It is time to shut it down.

Fifth, the Administration and the Congress must immediately focus on the role of civilian contractors in Iraq. There are up to 20,000 private contractors operating in Iraq, carrying out military roles from logistics and local army training to guarding installations and convoys. It is stunning that the Defense Department would contract out the interrogation of prisoners of war to private firms. A number of