

August 27, 2004

Dear Friend,

After reviewing the first major reports released on the abuse scandal at the notorious Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq, I believe the findings refute the White House's claims that the abuses were isolated incidents carried out by a few individuals.

On Tuesday, Former Secretary of Defense James Schlesinger, chair of the panel, described the prison as having "an Animal House atmosphere." The panel's report describes the events at the prison as "acts of brutality and purposeless sadism." The U.S. Army's internal investigation released Wednesday by Maj. Gen. George R. Fay shows that individual misconduct, a lack of discipline and leadership failure at the highest levels of the Pentagon produced the atmosphere that allowed mistreatment to flourish.

Since the chilling images of torture at Abu Ghraib prison first became public there have been a slew of investigations and reports but so far only one person has been convicted and no one at the Pentagon has lost their job. These two reports sharply contrast with the Pentagon's own investigations into mistreatment at Abu Ghraib. The Pentagon has not taken responsibility for an outrage that has severely damaged America's reputation in Iraq and around the world.

While these reports were lengthy (one is over 9,000 pages), an independent commission – similar to the 9/11 Commission – must review the events that took place to shed full light on mistreatment of detainees in Iraq. Such a commission would hold hearings, have full subpoena power, and be empowered to recommend the creation of a special prosecutor to investigate possible criminal offenses. The commission would examine, among other things, the link between the administration policy discussions and memos and actual practices in Iraq.

Please click [here](#) for more information.

Thank you for taking the time to read this newsletter.

Very truly yours,

Tom Udall