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## **Send Message on Abuse**

Our position: The Bush administration needs to take stronger action against rogue troops.

Editorial  
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Anyone who wants the American missions in Afghanistan as well as Iraq to succeed can't help but be dismayed that TV footage purportedly showed U.S. troops burning the bodies of two Taliban fighters, an act considered deeply offensive to Muslims.

The State Department quickly instructed U.S. embassies to stress that the footage doesn't reflect American values or the actions of "the vast majority" of U.S. military members. While that's undoubtedly true, putting out that message is not enough.

The desecration in Afghanistan, if true, would be just the latest case of abuse or misconduct by U.S. troops in Afghanistan, Iraq and Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. Together these incidents betray, at the very least, systemic problems in training and supervision of U.S. troops. They call for a serious and comprehensive response from the Bush administration -- not just another narrow investigation.

The actions of rogue U.S. troops do not compare to the suicide bombings, hostage beheadings and other atrocities perpetrated by terrorists. But in a struggle to win hearts and minds, the United States cannot afford to alienate any allies. U.S. abuses also make it easier for terrorists to recruit followers, and put all U.S. troops in greater danger.

The Bush administration needs to underscore its intolerance for abuses by U.S. troops with deeds, not just words. It can start by dropping its threat to veto a common-sense Senate measure that would prohibit cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment of prisoners in U.S. military custody.