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Stop Military Abuse

Letter to the Editor
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First it was abuses in Guantánamo Bay, and I dismissed it as one of those rare incidents that has nothing to do with the overall discipline or psyche in the military.

Then came Abu Ghraib, Fallujah, Bagram in Afghanistan and now the latest -- Gonbaz in southern Afghanistan. Australia's SBS television network aired a Dateline segment on Oct. 19 showing U.S. soldiers burning the corpses of two Taliban fighters laid out facing Mecca, the focal point of prayer in Islam.

Some of us may condone such acts, comparing them to atrocious acts committed by terrorists and justifying it as a backlash. We, part of a civilized nation, must set the standards for the rest of the world. If we stoop to the same low levels, what would separate us from terrorists?

President Bush appointed Karen Hughes to promote America's image in the Muslim world. She made a concerted effort by visiting several countries last month. But the abuses committed by our military personnel harm America's image and wash away whatever goodwill we strive to achieve. It's one step forward and two steps backward in diplomacy.

Given the growing number of such incidents involving American military personnel worldwide, it is imperative that the Pentagon launch a top-to-bottom review of policies and training to help prevent the war on terror from being perceived as a war on Islam.

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