

ability to give their country a new lease of life. For such sceptics, the Iraqi prisoners issue triggers a two pronged painful question.

On the one hand, this controversy raises the issue of the treatment of Afghan prisoners, whose fate remains hidden from the world.

It is only the word of the US military and other authorities which suggests that living conditions for Afghan prisoners remain acceptable. But there's absolutely no way to independently verify such claims.

On the other hand, the Iraqi prisoners' issue reinforces not only the message that the US remains—fundamentally—a country which is hostile towards the Muslim world, but also one whose actions only aggravate global crises rather than provide solutions for them. At a global level, the fallout from the Iraqi prisoners issue would be hard to pacify without a clear-cut demonstration of political consequences through steps such as US President Bush asking Rumsfeld to step down.

Without a clear message which suggests that this case has sparked enough urgency in Washington that heads are beginning to roll, the bitterness across the Muslim world will not even begin to pacify.

On the ground, in a country like Afghanistan, there's a great urgency to quickly establish new parameters to ensure transparency surrounding prisoners in different jails, be they those in the custody of the US or those being held by one of its allies. Apart from taking such vital measures regarding the treatment of prisoners in Afghanistan, Washington also needs to move decisively towards beginning to resolve the issue of prisoners incarcerated in Guantanamo Bay.

Simultaneously, Washington's determination to build a new political order in Afghanistan dominated by its handpicked leaders also needs to be fundamentally reviewed.

While there may not appear to be any direct clash between the prisoners issue and the political future of Afghanistan, the two issues are not entirely unconnected. For many sceptics who look upon the US as an invading power, both trends appear driven by the determination to enforce brute authority. The prisoners on their own, suspected to be living in sub-human conditions, may not be able to challenge Washington's military authority. But there are many others who would continue to be bitter about the US, drawing inspiration from Washington's controversial action.

Through time, such bitterness and anger will only translate into hostility towards the US. To make matters worse in Afghanistan, Washington's failure to pour billions of dollars once expected by most Afghans will only begin to lay the basis for frustration with the US as a problem solver. Tragically though, Afghanistan may be fated to live through one of its worst periods of recurring turmoil between now and the end of the year, ahead of the US presidential elections.

In its zeal to quickly solve the security problems central to Afghanistan's past profile as a terrorist state, the US military, with or without Washington's tacit direction, may well intensify its search for so-called terrorists.

In doing so, it's likely to run up against one wall or another.

Perhaps, the search for terrorists may intensify the urgency to step up the so-called interrogations of prisoners caught in the Afghan war.

The worst in the saga surrounding prisoners in the US military's captivity may not be over yet.

The BBC asked viewers and listeners to comment. From South Africa came

this: "The U.S. Secretary of Shame should just do the honorable thing and resign."

From Switzerland: "Rumsfeld is the apex of an arrogant military lobby in the U.S., a bunch of people who have no concern for human rights, freedom, liberty and moral values which were seen as the inseparable ideology of the United States."

From England: "Bush's administration has brought anarchy not democracy."

In Iraq today, Secretary Rumsfeld called himself a survivor as he spoke to the soldiers. This is the typical administration technique. Say something over and over and over and hope the people will begin to believe it. Fly a banner, take a picture, hope it all goes away.

The Secretary of War should have been talking about how America's credibility can survive this administration. Secretary Rumsfeld should have been talking about how America's leadership can survive the neo-cons. The Secretary should have been talking about how our men and women in Iraq can survive the new dangers they face.

It is too much to ask, I know. The PR machine cannot grasp anything as obvious as worldwide outrage. They call it a focus group. Meanwhile, they will do everything possible to prop up Rumsfeld, even as he comes to symbolize a disastrous foreign policy.

Today, Secretary Rumsfeld runs the DOD, but it no longer stands for the Department of Defense. Under this administration, under this Secretary, DOD has come to mean "divert or deny." The world sees it. The world knows it. The administration just does not get it yet. November 2 is coming.

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

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

EXCHANGE OF SPECIAL ORDER TIME

Mr. TIAHRT. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to take the 5 minutes of the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. McCOTTER).

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

There was no objection.

IT IS TIME TO CHANGE THE STATUS QUO

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

Mr. TIAHRT. Mr. Speaker, over the last generation, Congress has acted with good intentions; but it has resulted in bad consequences. We have

developed, through policy here on the floor of the House over the past generation, policies that have driven jobs offshore. We have forced costs on employers that they are unable to control, and they do not even get a vote, and the result, a loss of jobs and a loss of the American dream for those who want those jobs and a successful career.

I was speaking recently with the CEO of Raytheon Corporation in Wichita, Kansas; and we were talking about a wire harness shop. He had worked with his machinists union and tried to develop a way to keep that shop within the Raytheon Corporation. He realized after several tries that even if wages were at zero he would still be forced to move these jobs overseas in order to remain competitive. The reason these costs were driving jobs overseas was not because of the wages. It was because of the higher cost imposed by Congress over the last generation through their policies.

I spoke with the CEO of Convergys. He told me that it was about the same to build a building in New Delhi or in Manila or in Wichita, Kansas. Overhead, in other words, is about the same around the globe.

So if it is not wages and it is not overhead, Mr. Speaker, what is it that is driving up costs that CEOs have no control over and is forcing our jobs overseas? Well, we have looked at these costs, and we have decided it is time to change this environment that is keeping jobs from coming back to America. It is time we changed the status quo.

We found out that these costs can be divided into eight separate categories, and we have developed eight issues; and for this week and the seven weeks that follow, we are going to attempt to change that environment, and I believe the change is coming.

The first of these issues is health care security. These are costs that are driven by an increase of regulation, increase of lawsuits, increase of mismanagement from the Federal level; and the result has been a 12 percent increase in the growth of health care costs just this past year. This is now the sixth year where we have had double-digit growth in health care costs, and it has forced health care costs to double since 1999.

It has raised the number of uninsured in America. So this week, we passed association health plans which allowed associations to gather together and lower their health care costs by bargaining with a larger number of people.

We passed flexible savings accounts so that employees could save money for health care costs and become more involved in health care decisions and shop around for health care services, reducing the cost and increasing the number of people on the insured rolls.

We also limited medical malpractice costs by medical malpractice reform. That alone will increase the number of insured by almost 4 million Americans.

We also found out there is a second issue, and one we are going to be addressing next week is the costs that are