THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

July 29, 2009

Senator Joseph I. Lieberman
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

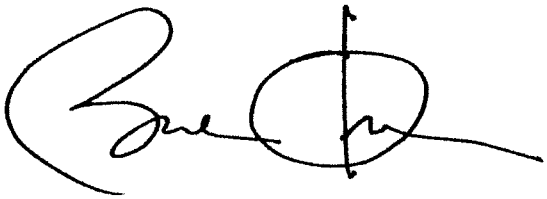
Senator Lindsey Graham
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senators Lieberman and Graham:

As you know, I oppose the release of certain photographs that were taken of detainees captured or detained by United States forces. There was and is no debate as to whether what is reflected in those photos is wrong, and any individual who violates standards of behavior should be investigated and held accountable, I believe that any abuse of detainees is unacceptable. It is against our values, endangers our security, and will not be tolerated.

But I also must weigh the fact that there are nearly 200,000 Americans who are serving in harm's way, and I have a solemn responsibility for their safety as Commander-in-Chief. It is my judgment—informed by military and civilian members of my national security team—that releasing these photos would inflame anti-American opinion and allow our enemies to paint United States troops with a broad, damning, and inaccurate brush, thereby endangering them in theaters of war. Nothing would be gained by the release of these photos that matters more than the lives of our young men and women serving in harm's way.

Consistent with my decision not to disclose the photographs, the Senate has unanimously passed the Detainee Photographic Records Protection Act, both as a stand-alone bill and as an amendment to the Homeland Security appropriations bill.

I support this legislation, will work with Congress to get it passed and look forward to signing it.

Sincerely,