Mr. Chairman, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

First, I would like to thank the gentleman from Maine (Mr. Allen) for

working with me on this amendment and for his leadership and for being

here to speak on this today.

This amendment is not about the war, although I offered an

alternative to keep us out of Iraq when this war began. This amendment

is not about bringing our troops home, although I believe we should do

that and do it right away.

This amendment is not about holding the President accountable for

misleading us into an unjust and unnecessary war, although he should.

Mr. Chairman, the amendment I am offering is very simple. It would

provide that no funds would be used under this bill to enter into

military base agreements between the United States and Iraq. Stating

this will clearly indicate that the United States has no intention of

making military bases permanent.

Mr. Chairman, can't we all agree on that right here and now, that we

should not be in Iraq permanently? Unfortunately, this administration's

position is unclear.

The President shares our views and said as much, I thought. On April

13, 2004, President Bush said, ``As a proud and independent people,

Iraqis do not support an indefinite occupation, and neither does

America.''

But just yesterday, General Abizaid, the general in charge of U.S.

troops in Iraq, told a Defense Appropriations Committee that the U.S.

could end up having bases in Iraq. So I think we need to be clear. The

aim of my amendment is to simply codify the sentiment that the

President and many of our constituents and many of us strongly believe

here.

As we stand here today, the United States has renewed a bombing

campaign against the insurgents, the largest assault since the

invasion; and this is taking us in exactly the wrong direction.

Destroying villages in the hopes of routing out insurgents only creates

more insurgents.

In adopting this amendment, we can take the target off our troops'

backs by sending a strong and immediate signal to the Iraqi people, the

insurgents, and the international community that the United States has

no designs on Iraq.

This very simple point is supported by a poll conducted by the

University of Maryland's Program on International Policy Attitudes

earlier this year. They found that 76 percent of Iraqis believe that

the United States

will maintain bases in Iraq permanently even if the newly elected

government asks the United States to leave Iraq.

Mr. Chairman, we need to be on record that we must not have permanent

military bases in Iraq. I urge my colleagues to support this amendment.

Mr. Chairman, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. Chairman, I yield myself the balance of my time.

I will just close by thanking you, Mr. Lewis, for giving us time and

for allowing for those who have a real perspective, the passion, the

understanding to speak on this issue tonight. It is so important that

the country understand that whether we agreed or disagreed with the

war, that many of us believe there should be no permanent presence in

Iraq.

We support our troops. We want them out of harm's way. We know that

any notion of a permanent occupation or permanent bases continues to

put our young men and women in harm's way. It is about time now that

these signals be clear to the rest of the world. As I

said, we get mixed signals from the administration.

I think it is now the time for this House to say that whatever we

believed, when this war started, we do not want to be a permanent

occupying force, and we do not want permanent military bases in Iraq.

Thank you for being so generous, Mr. Lewis.