Mr. Chairman, the Cold War ended more than

two decades ago, and the Iron Curtain and the Soviet Union no longer

exist.

While the United States is spending 4.7 percent of our economy on

defense, only 4 out of 28 of our NATO allies are spending even 2

percent of their economy on defense. Our allies in Europe have

drastically reduced their national defense spending because they take

for granted that the United States will continue to be the guarantor of

their security. Now it is time for our NATO allies to provide more of

their own security and not be so reliant upon the United States.

We face difficult budget challenges here at home. The resources that

we are currently spending on maintaining a military presence in Europe

are needed to meet much more significant security challenges elsewhere.

The Pentagon has recently stated that the American military presence

in Europe is a diminishing priority and has proposed removing two

combat brigade teams in fiscal year 2013. This bipartisan limiting

amendment to the Defense appropriations bill will force the Department

of Defense to follow through with withdrawing two brigade combat teams

from Europe and will deny the ability for the Pentagon to reverse this

decision later.

Mr. Chairman, I yield to the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. Blumenauer).

To the gentleman from Washington, I believe

that this certainly does not disallow us to maintain rotational forces

in Europe. There is no provision within the NATO Charter that requires

the United States to maintain a permanent military presence in Europe.

To the gentleman from Washington, there is

no requirement where we have to maintain a permanent military presence

in Europe.