I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 2929, the Lee-Allen

bill to ban permanent bases in Iraq.

Regardless of one's position on U.S. military operations, we can all

agree on the need for the Iraqi Government to succeed. The perception

that the United States plans a permanent presence in Iraq fuels the

resentment against our troops and complicates the path towards

political reconciliation in Iraq. Too many Iraqis believe that we

intend to stay in their country indefinitely.

A clear statement by Congress, not part of a larger bill, that we do

not intend a long-term or permanent military presence in Iraq is

necessary to send a strong signal to the Iraqi people and to the world.

It supports our goal of handing over responsibility for security and

public safety to Iraqi forces.

Passage last year of prohibitions on permanent bases in Iraq based on

legislation I wrote with the gentlewoman from California (Ms. Lee)

marked perhaps the first time Congress legislated to change the

direction of our Iraq policy. In total, three ``no permanent base''

provisions have been enacted. H.R. 2929 make these permanent. Twice the

House has rejected amendments to weaken these provisions.

Recent statements by administration officials, however, are

troubling. The White House Press Secretary said recently the President

envisions a United States military presence in Iraq ``as we have in

South Korea,'' where American troops have been based for more than 50

years. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates made similar comments.

H.R. 2929 reaffirms that the United States has a clear and consistent

policy against a permanent U.S. military presence in Iraq. I urge its

adoption.