Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentlelady from Florida for

yielding me the time.

There has been a consistent message that has been put forth by

Congress that we are not interested in permanent bases in Iraq, but

that should not diminish our need to have a presence there at this

time. We must not jeopardize United States security interests. At issue

here is the definition of the word ``permanent.'' No one can quite

agree on what that really means.

This bill is similar to one we passed earlier when we passed language

in the supplemental on this topic. The point is, we do not intend to be

in Iraq permanently. We are not interested in Iraqi oil.

I do believe our military is stretched too thin throughout the world.

We literally have a U.S. troop presence in almost every country on the

globe, from military bases in Germany to Korea and other places in

between. Some of those bases seem like they are permanent because we

have been in those areas for so long. Our troops in those nations

remain an issue of really another debate.

The issue here is over permanent basing in Iraq. We should have

installations or naval ships in an area where our troops can quickly

deploy, and Iraq really should be no different. But we've never set out

to occupy any nation. We are not an imperial Nation. We do not intend

to violate the sovereignty of another nation by occupying it. This has

always been United States policy. The United States came to liberate,

not conquer, Iraq, and this is our policy.

In a letter one of my colleagues addressed to Chairman Peter Pace,

Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Pace was asked his

thoughts on the need to have the U.S. enter into and retain the ability

to enter into agreed military basing rights agreements with Iraq and in

Iraq. In his response, General Pace stated it's the intention of the

United States military to ``work closely with Iraq's sovereign

government to decide the terms and what foreign military forces . . .

will remain in Iraq.''

Historically, basing rights agreements have been a necessary part of

diplomatic relations with foreign governments, but they've always been

agreed to by the United States and that other nation. These agreements

outline guidelines and conditions for operating American military bases

and troops worldwide.

It is both common and responsible for the United States to enter into

temporary basing agreements with other countries hosting our troops.

This is being done in every country hosting United States troops, and

the representative Government of Iraq should not really be an

exception. And we should continue to work with them on temporary

basing, but not permanent basing.

We shouldn't somehow put Iraq in some type of different category than

we have other allies in the world, but we should make it clear that our

basing rights are only temporary. So, designating that we may have

temporary basing rights is only logical in Iraq, but a permanent

presence in Iraq is not desired. And it has been the statement of this

Congress before.

So I support this legislation.