Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may

consume.

Iraqi Kurds have been willing partners with the United States since

the beginning of the transition to democracy in Iraq in 2003. They

personally endured the brutal persecution and murder, including the use

of chemical weapons, that characterized the tyranny of Saddam Hussein's

regime over Iraq. Their determination to prevent the recurrence of such

persecution underlies their partnership with us in battling against

terrorists, insurgents, and other militant extremists who seek to

undermine the progress made in Iraq. They have committed themselves to

a future within a Federal Republic of Iraq, a future of stability, of

prosperity and democracy, of freedom and human rights. This is their

vision, and this is our vision. Indeed, the future of United States

cooperation with the Republic of Iraq in general, including the

Kurdistan region, contains great opportunity for us.

As we responsibly redeploy from Iraq in accordance with our Status of

Forces Agreement with the Republic of Iraq, we are continuing to

normalize our bilateral relations at many different levels, as we

should. One way to do so is to establish U.S. consulates in appropriate

regions of Iraq, including in the Kurdistan region. Currently, United

States citizens living in or visiting the Kurdistan Region of Iraq must

travel 200 miles away to our embassy in Baghdad to receive consular

services. Increased U.S. Government civilian representation throughout

Iraq will serve American interests during this period of transition,

increasing opportunities for travel, governmental and nongovernmental

missions, people-to-people exchanges between our two nations, and for

attracting greater U.S. business and investment in Iraq. And in this

respect, establishing a consulate in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq will

help ensure that the region continues to serve as a gateway for

American businesses and investment to other regions of Iraq.

Establishing U.S. consulates will also advance continued dialogue

between the United States and the Republic of Iraq, including dialogue

with the Kurdistan Regional Government.

Finally, U.S. consulates in Iraq will hopefully help to ensure that

stability, security, prosperity, human rights and freedom in Iraq,

including in the Kurdistan Region, are protected and strengthened in

the days and months and years ahead. Already, 15 countries, including

leading European countries, have consular representation in the capital

of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. Therefore, I strongly support House

Resolution 873, which calls for the establishment of U.S. consulates in

appropriate regions of Iraq, including Kurdistan.

I thank the distinguished ranking member of the Subcommittee on

International Organizations, Human Rights, and Oversight, Mr.

Rohrabacher from California, for sponsoring this resolution.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Madam Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume

to the gentleman from California (Mr. Rohrabacher), the ranking member

of the Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on International Organizations,

Human Rights, and Oversight and the author of this legislation.