

and pray with them for those who had perished in that disaster. In providing some solace to the people concerned, I was happy to be able to do something useful.

This time the location of the earthquake, Kyigudo (Chinese: Yushu), lies in Qinghai Province, which happens to be where both the late Panchen Lama and I were born. To fulfill the wishes of many of the people there, I am eager to go there myself to offer them comfort.

In conclusion, I appeal to governments, international aid organisations and other agencies to extend whatever assistance they can to enable the families of those devastated by this tragedy to rebuild their lives. At the same time, I also call on the survivors of this catastrophe to recognise what has happened as the workings of karma and to transform this adversity into something positive, keeping their hopes up and meeting setbacks with courage as they struggle to restore what they have lost. Once again, I pray for those who have lost their lives as well as for the well being of those who have survived.

I call upon the administration to hear the cries of the Tibetan victims of this tragic national disaster and to advocate for a visit by their spiritual leader, the Dalai Lama. I urge Beijing leadership to show some mercy and allow a visit to the earthquake area by the Dalai Lama as well—a location very near the site where he was actually born. Only when their spiritual leader is allowed to come and offer solace to their grief and suffering can the Tibetan victims of this national tragic disaster truly begin to heal.

Madam Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. McMAHON. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Just to continue on a point that I failed to mention, the issue of the Tibetan people is, of course, very near and dear to me as well. I have in my district the only Tibetan cultural museum in North America. And it's a site that we have worked with and honored for years—the importance of the Tibetan people, their culture, and what it means to the whole world, and that they are allowed to continue to survive and flourish in this world. And so on many points I agree with the gentleman from Texas.

I have no further requests for time, and yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from New York (Mr. McMAHON) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 1324.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the ayes have it.

Mr. McMAHON. Madam Speaker, I object to the vote on the ground that a quorum is not present and make the point of order that a quorum is not present.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

The point of no quorum is considered withdrawn.

URGING ESTABLISHMENT OF U.S. CONSULATE IN KURDISTAN REGION OF IRAQ

Mr. McMAHON. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 873) establishing a United States Consulate in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The text of the resolution is as follows:

H. RES. 873

Whereas 15 countries, including leading European nations, have diplomatic and consular representation in Erbil, the capital of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq;

Whereas the United States Department of State modified its Travel Warning for Iraq this year to reflect the relative safety and security of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq;

Whereas the establishment of a United States Consulate in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, as well as in other regions of Iraq, is consistent with current United States policy to normalize United States-Iraqi relations at the diplomatic, commercial, cultural, and educational levels as United States Armed Forces responsibly redeploy from Iraq in accordance with the Status of Forces Agreement between the United States and Iraq;

Whereas greater United States Government civilian representation throughout Iraq, including in the Kurdistan Region, will serve United States interests during this period of transition;

Whereas the establishment of a United States Consulate in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq will increase travel between the United States and Iraq and thus strengthen people-to-people exchanges between both sides;

Whereas currently, United States citizens either living in or visiting the Kurdistan Region of Iraq must travel to the United States Embassy in Baghdad, 200 miles away, to receive consular services;

Whereas the establishment of a United States Consulate in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq will be helpful both in attracting greater United States business and investment to the region and in ensuring that the region continues to serve as a "gateway" to United States business success in other parts of Iraq, as a number of United States Government agencies have advocated;

Whereas the establishment of a United States Consulate in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq will reaffirm United States support for the stability, prosperity, and democracy that the Kurdistan Region of Iraq has achieved;

Whereas the establishment of a United States Consulate in Iraq, including in the Kurdistan Region will facilitate more governmental and nongovernmental missions between the United States and the Iraq;

Whereas the Kurds of Iraq have been willing partners with the United States in the democratic transition in Iraq since 2003;

Whereas the United States and the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) have been full partners in the battle against terrorists who seek to undermine progress toward an Iraq that is prosperous, free, and federal;

Whereas the establishment of a United States Consulate in the Kurdistan Region and in other regions will play a helpful role in continuing to safeguard Iraq's territorial integrity from external aggression and support United States and Iraqi diplomatic initiatives that seek to prevent outside interference in Iraq's affairs;

Whereas the establishment of a United States Consulate in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq will also foster continued dialogue between the United States and the KRG; and

Whereas the establishment of a United States Consulate in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq will positively contribute to continued diplomatic initiatives between the KRG and Turkey: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the House of Representatives—

(1) calls on the Department of State to establish a United States Consulate in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, as well as in other appropriate regions of Iraq; and

(2) affirms that the establishment of a United States Consulate in the Kurdistan Region as well as in other regions of Iraq will be an important United States diplomatic step in supporting stability, prosperity, human rights, and democracy throughout Iraq.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from New York (Mr. McMAHON) and the gentleman from Texas (Mr. POE) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New York.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. McMAHON. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the resolution under consideration.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from New York?

There was no objection.

Mr. McMAHON. Madam Speaker, I rise in strong support of this resolution, and yield myself such time as I may consume.

This resolution expresses the sense of Congress that the United States should establish a consulate in the Kurdistan region of Iraq. As the United States military presence in Iraq winds down and our diplomatic presence increases, a consulate in northern Iraq will prove indispensable to America. Fifteen countries, including Iran, Turkey, and a leading number of European countries, have already opened consulates in Erbil, the capital of the Kurdistan regional government. It would benefit U.S. national security to follow suit. American economic interests would also be served by opening a consulate in northern Iraq. Indeed, Iraqi Kurdistan offers numerous business opportunities across a number of important sectors, including energy development and infrastructure. The lack of a consulate in northern Iraq is preventing U.S. firms from taking full advantage of these new economic opportunities in a rapidly developing region. Instead, contracts are going to Iranian, European, Turkish, and Asian corporations.

Finally, the absence of a U.S. consulate in northern Iraq makes it extremely difficult for the residents of that region—Kurds, Arabs, and others—to gain access to U.S. consular services. Iraqis from the north must drive more than 200 miles to reach the American Embassy in Baghdad. And

some of the territory they are forced to cover is treacherous. This is no way to encourage Iraqi communication with American diplomats or to handle passport issues.

Madam Speaker, this year, the State Department modified its travel warning for Iraq, reflecting the relative safety and security in the Kurdistan region. And we must not forget that the Kurdish people of Iraq have been partners with the United States for many years. I believe that the establishment of the United States consulate in the Kurdistan region of Iraq will demonstrate our strong commitment to maintaining and building upon a success and stability that has already been achieved in that part of Iraq, thanks in large part to the proud, brave, and courageous warriors from our armed services. I also believe that we should open consulates in the majority Shia south and the majority Sunni Arab center of the country to expand America's diplomatic reach and presence throughout Iraq.

Madam Speaker, the future of United States-Iraqi relations will be based on diplomacy and security. Expanding our consular access in northern Iraq will contribute both to our national security goals and to the stabilization and success of the Iraqi nation. I encourage all of my colleagues to support H. Res. 873.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. POE of Texas. 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.

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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. ROHRBACHER from California, for sponsoring this resolution.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. MCMAHON. Madam Speaker, at this time I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. DAVIS).

Mr. DAVIS of Tennessee. Madam Speaker, I thank the chairman.

I rise in strong support of House Resolution 873. On several occasions, I have had the opportunity to visit Iraq and had the privilege of visiting the Kurdistan Region. I have seen firsthand the stability in this rapidly developing part of Iraq. Which is why on October 27 of last year, I joined Congressman ROHRBACHER in introducing H. Res. 873, a resolution that would encourage the State Department to establish an American consulate in Erbil, which is the capital city of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. Almost 20 other countries, including developed European allies and other world powers, have already set up their consulates in the Kurdistan Region, and America, I believe, should do the same. Establishing a consulate in Iraqi Kurdistan should be part of our transition in Iraq, from a military presence to a civilian and diplomatic one. This is an important step on Iraq's path to normalization and recognizes the growing stability in that part of the world and in northern Iraq.

A consulate in Erbil will serve both U.S. and Iraqi interests. A consulate

will aid in fostering the growing economic, potential commercial and cultural/educational ties between the Kurdistan Region of Iraq and the U.S. The lack of a consulate is putting America at a disadvantage in the region and is a disservice, I believe, to our Iraqi Kurdish partners.

Since introduction of this resolution, the State Department has released plans to set up two permanent consulates in Iraq, readying itself for a larger role in the country as the U.S. military presence prepares to leave. The administration is requesting funds in the military supplemental for a consulate in Basra and one in northern Iraq. I believe the one in northern Iraq should be located in Erbil.

Erbil is one of the longest contiguous residential cities in the world, and as we have engaged in Operation Iraqi Freedom, not a single soldier, not a single American life has been lost in combat in the northern part of Iraq. America's friends throughout the world and America's friends in Kurdistan I believe deserve the presence of a consulate in this country in Erbil in northern Iraq.

Mr. POE of Texas. Madam Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from California (Mr. ROHRBACHER), the ranking member of the Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on International Organizations, Human Rights, and Oversight and the author of this legislation.

Mr. ROHRBACHER. Madam Speaker, I rise in strong support of my resolution, H. Res. 873, and ask my colleagues to join me in this both moral and practical resolution.

A strong relationship with the Kurdish people serves the cause of peace, stability and democratic government in a region that needs a lot of bolstering when it comes to peace, stability and democratic government. It is a strong relationship with the Kurds that will keep radical Islamic forces in other parts of Iraq in check. It is a strong relationship with the Kurds that will offset the support that is going to these radical elements in the rest of Iraq and the region. As we know, the Kurds over the years have a history of being an oppressed people. Thus, they are natural allies of the United States, a country, our country, whose tradition is supporting oppressed peoples and struggling with them to promote democracy, opportunity and prosperity. If we can count on the Kurds, we will know that there's an opportunity for peace and stability in that area that wouldn't exist otherwise. And if they can count on us, the Kurds, we can count on them. This legislation will codify that relationship and that friendship by establishing an American consulate in Erbil, which is in the Kurdish part of Iraq. Let me note that 20 other countries, including European nations and other world powers, have diplomatic and consulate representation in Erbil, which is the capital of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

The Kurds have been willing partners of the United States since that democratic transition in Iraq began in 2003, and the Kurdish part of the country has served as a model for Iraq's democratization ever since Operation Iraqi Freedom.

We should move forward with this. Actually, it really is a sorry comment that we have to have congressional legislation to force the State Department to have a consulate in Kurdistan or in the Kurdish region of Iraq. This makes all the sense in the world. It's good for them. It's good for us. It's good for the people of Iraq. It creates an area of stability in which we are officially recognizing that concept of a peaceful relationship with the Kurds in order to have peace in Iraq.

So I ask my fellow colleagues to join me today in officially recognizing this great friendship that serves us all so well by enabling the State Department to open a consulate in Erbil, Kurdistan, and, again, underscoring the great friendship between the Kurds and the American people, a friendship that serves both our countries well.

Mr. POE of Texas. Madam Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. McMAHON. Madam Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from New York (Mr. McMAHON) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 873, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the resolution, as amended, was agreed to.

The title of the resolution was amended so as to read: "Calling for the establishment of a United States Consulate in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq along with similar efforts in other areas of Iraq."

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

UNITED STATES-ISRAEL ROCKET AND MISSILE DEFENSE COOPERATION AND SUPPORT ACT

Mr. McMAHON. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 5327) to authorize assistance to Israel for the Iron Dome anti-missile defense system, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 5327

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "United States-Israel Rocket and Missile Defense Cooperation and Support Act".

SEC. 2. FINDINGS.

Congress finds the following:

(1) The Jewish State of Israel, as a close and indispensable ally of the United States, with whom the United States enjoys mutually-beneficial military, intelligence, home-

land security, scientific, technological, and other cooperation, deserves all necessary assistance to defend itself and its citizens from the many threats that it continues to face.

(2) The State of Israel has been under grave threat and frequent attack from missiles, rockets, and mortar shells fired at Israeli civilian targets by militants from the Foreign Terrorist Organization Hamas on its southern border and by the Foreign Terrorist Organization Hezbollah on its northern border, which have killed, wounded, or inflicted psychological trauma on countless Israelis.

(3) The United States remains committed to Israel's qualitative military edge, including its advantage over non-state actors such as Hamas and Hezbollah, which boast increasingly sophisticated and powerful weapons as a result of support from Iran, Syria, and other state actors.

(4) Regional stability and lasting peace between Israel and the Palestinians requires that Israel can ensure the safety of its population against rocket, missile, and other threats.

(5) The United States can help to advance its own vital national security interests and the cause of peace by supporting Israel's ability to defend itself against rocket, missile, and other threats.

(6) The State of Israel announced in January 2010 the successful testing of its Iron Dome Short Range Artillery Rocket Defense System which is designed to intercept short-range rockets, missiles, and mortars launched by militants in Gaza and southern Lebanon.

(7) In the face of threats from its neighbors and non-state actors, Israel historically has sought the means to defend itself, by itself.

(8) President Barack Obama has stated: "Our commitment to Israel's security is unshakable."

(9) Vice President Joe Biden has stated: "From my experience, the one precondition for progress is that the rest of the world knows this—there is no space between the U.S. and Israel when it comes to security—none."

(10) Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates has stated: "President Obama has affirmed, the United States commitment to Israel's security is unshakable, and our defense relationship is stronger than ever, to the mutual benefit of both nations."

(11) President Obama recently requested funds to help the State of Israel procure and maintain Iron Dome missile batteries.

SEC. 3. AUTHORIZATION OF ASSISTANCE TO ISRAEL FOR IRON DOME ANTI-MISSILE DEFENSE SYSTEM.

The President, acting through the Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of State, is authorized to provide assistance to the Government of Israel for the procurement, maintenance, and sustainment of the Iron Dome Short Range Artillery Rocket Defense System for purposes of intercepting short-range rockets, missiles, and mortars launched against Israel.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from New York (Mr. McMAHON) and the gentleman from Texas (Mr. POE) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New York.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. McMAHON. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the bill under consideration.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from New York?

There was no objection.

Mr. McMAHON. Madam Speaker, I rise in strong support of this legislation and yield myself as much time as I may consume.

H.R. 5327, the United States-Israel Rocket and Missile Defense Cooperation and Support Act of which I am a proud original cosponsor, authorizes funds for the State of Israel to facilitate the deployment of the Iron Dome missile defense system. I would like to thank the distinguished gentleman from Virginia (Mr. NYE) for introducing this important legislation.

Madam Speaker, as we all know, the residents of Israel are subject to the constant threat of terrorist attack—not just threat but actual attack. Israelis living in the southern city of Sderot have been terrorized by more than 8,000 indiscriminate rocket and mortar attacks on their homes, schools and communities. Passage of the U.S.-Israel Rocket and Missile Defense Cooperation and Support Act today will help provide Israel with a reliable missile shield that could lead to a major strategic shift in Israel's approach to dealing with the persistent missile threat.

For years, the primary tool that Israel has used to protect its citizens from Hamas and Hezbollah missile attacks is an early warning system that sets off sirens telling people to hurry into bomb shelters. This is a passive defense which aims to minimize fatalities among helpless, unprotected civilians. The deployment of the Iron Dome missile shield will give Israel the capability to provide active defense. This advanced system has the capability of knocking Qassams, Katyushas, mortars and other deadly projectiles out of the sky, rendering them harmless.

President Obama's decision to provide the necessary funding to support Israel's deployment of the Iron Dome system demonstrates America's enduring commitment to Israel's enduring defense and the Obama administration's commitment to ensuring Israel's security. As Secretary of Defense Robert Gates recently said, "President Obama has affirmed, the United States' commitment to Israel's security is unshakable, and our defense relationship is stronger than ever, to the mutual benefit of both nations." Madam Speaker, U.S.-Israeli cooperation on the Iron Dome system will help advance the cause of peace by supporting Israel's ability to defend herself against terrorist attacks. This will give Israel the security it requires to live in peace and to make difficult sacrifices for peace. I believe defensive technologies like Iron Dome are a real-world necessity for Israel as it moves from proximity talks to direct talks and eventually to a final two-state solution.

Madam Speaker, the United States and our ally Israel share many of the