

appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

34TH YEAR SINCE THE INVASION AND OCCUPATION OF THE REPUBLIC OF CYPRUS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. SARBANES) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. SARBANES. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to mark the 34th year since the invasion and occupation of the Republic of Cyprus. Since 1974, Turkish military forces have illegally occupied the northern part of the island republic. The Turkish occupation forcibly divides peaceful communities and deprives a sovereign nation the exercise of democratic independence in all of its territory.

The Turkish invasion divided Greek-speaking and Turkish-speaking Cypriots into two physically distinct communities for the first time in the island nation's history. The unlawful occupation of 37 percent of the territory of Cyprus continues unabated to this day. There are currently 43,000 Turkish troops garrisoned in the occupied areas, and Turkey has resettled over 100,000 mainland Turkish citizens into those areas.

The continued Turkish occupation of the island republic subverts the indigenous effort to establish a democratically free and culturally unique Cypriot nation. All that stands in the way of Cypriots celebrating their unique and diverse national heritage within the expanded borders of the European Union is the presence of the Turkish occupation forces.

Today, thousands of Cypriots continue to be refugees in their own land, blocked from the homes and the communities they inhabited for generations. Some have been marooned in tiny enclaves trapped by the occupation forces, cut off from the outside world and basic human rights. A new generation of Cypriots has inherited the terrible displacement that military occupation brings.

In the face of all this, the Republic of Cypress has struggled and succeeded in building a strong society, one whose economic progress, development of democratic institutions and capable governance led to membership in the European Union in May 2004. Sadly, until there is an end to the occupation, the occupied areas of Cyprus will be denied the full benefits of EU membership.

For the United States, there is a clear imperative to resolve the situation in Cyprus as a matter of justice and the rule of law, principles we hold dear. But beyond that, achieving reunification of the island is critical to the strategic interests of the United States. The Cyprus problem pits American allies against one another. The strategic interest in facilitating a negotiated settlement is significant for the region, but also for the world. Cy-

prus can either fester as a potential flash point or become a starting point for reconciliation.

Reconciliation talks are now underway between the leadership of the two Cypriot communities. The opportunity for reconciliation is real. Since Cyprus' entry to the EU, many checkpoints along the infamous green-line have been opened. After nearly 30 years of complete separation, there have been more than 13 million bi-communal crossings without any serious incident.

Everyday Cypriots of the Turkish-speaking community cross into the free areas of the Republic of Cyprus to go to work. Indeed, nearly 3 percent of the Turkish-speaking Cypriot community is employed in the free areas of the Republic of Cyprus, and more than 35,000 have applied for and received passports from the Republic of Cyprus.

The Cypriot people want an end to the division of their island. Their efforts to negotiate reconciliation through the good offices of the United Nations must be free of Turkish interference. It is no secret that successive Turkish governments and, in particular, the Turkish military, use Cyprus as a shibboleth to rouse extremist and nationalist sentiment to enhance their own domestic standing.

We, in the House of Representatives, should heed the political storm engulfing Turkey. Today, in Turkey democratic expression is challenged at every turn. Today, in Turkey religious and ethnic minorities live in a state of credible fear and harm of persecution. Today and for more than 80 years, the Turkish military holds itself out as the primary political actor existing beyond the bounds of democratic accountability.

Mr. Speaker, the United States should not yield to violations of human rights and the rule of law by the government of Turkey or the Turkish military. The United States, and its allies, particularly the European Union, must stand in solidarity with all Cypriots and support their commendable efforts to reconcile their differences and establish a bi-communal, bi-zonal federation.

With the support of this body, it should be made clear to Turkey that perpetuating the status quo on Cyprus hurts its relations with the United States and the rest of the world. Worst of all, it forecloses Turkey's prospects for accession to the European Union.

I ask my colleagues to support the reconciliation efforts now underway, and demand from our Turkish ally that it refrain from interfering in the reconciliation efforts now underway. With a truly concerted effort by this body, next year we will commend the Cypriots on their courageous reconciliation, instead of observing the 35th year of Turkish military occupation.

THE 73 PERCENT MAJORITY, A PLAN FOR INDEPENDENCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gen-

tleman from Texas (Mr. POE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. POE. Mr. Speaker, in our country, Americans debate, argue and discuss all types of issues. And because of the type of people we are, we seldom agree on everything. Almost any issue you bring before the American public, it is evenly split on most issues, about 50/50, sometimes a little more than others.

But today, 73 percent of all Americans believe we ought to drill offshore. That is a phenomenal number. 73 percent of Americans don't really agree on hardly anything, but they agree on drilling offshore because the American public gets it. They understand we need more crude oil, Mr. Speaker. And the only way we can get gasoline is from crude oil. And the offshore drilling ban by the President has been lifted.

The only thing standing between us and energy independence offshore is Congress. Congress has handcuffed the American public's will to drill offshore.

This map shows where we drill currently, Mr. Speaker. The section down here in the Southeast, where the blue markers are, now, I represent part of the State of Texas, and proud to do so. But we only drill in this country off the shore of Texas, Louisiana, parts of Mississippi, and parts of Alabama.

But yet, you see all of this red section, off of our shores, and in all of those areas there are places where there is crude oil on the bottom of the ocean. But yet, Congress won't let us drill there. There are a lot of reasons for that. They are all political, and they are all nonsense because there is oil out there.

Seventy-three percent of the American public say we ought to drill. We need help. Gasoline prices are too high. We can't afford to go to work. And even in California, 53 percent of the people who live on the West Coast in California say, for the first time in recent memory, that we ought to drill off that coast as well because there is crude oil out there in the Pacific. But because of political reasons and reasons that really don't make much sense we are not taking care of ourselves.

One argument is that we can't drill safely, that those oil rigs out there in the Gulf of Mexico and off the east and west coast will cause environmental damage because there will be pollution from that crude oil that would seep from those oil rigs. That is not correct, Mr. Speaker.

Give you the best example. In 2005, two hurricanes came blasting through my congressional district in Southeast Texas. Their names were Katrina and Rita. They came from Louisiana and Texas. Hundreds of offshore rigs in this area where we do drill were damaged or completely destroyed. But yet, we didn't hear 1 word about those rigs causing pollution from crude oil seepage from the bottom of the Gulf of Mexico, and the reason was it didn't