

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, May 14, 2008

Mr. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART of Florida. Madam Speaker, I wish to clarify my vote on Ordering the Previous Question on the Rule for the Conference Report on S. Con. Res. 70, the Budget Resolution.

In the 109th Congress, the Florida delegation, on a bi-partisan basis, worked hard to protect Florida's environmental treasures. The bill we achieved passage of, Public Law 109-432 (HR 6111), provided Florida with 125 mile protection off our coast. Furthermore, the legislation codified the ban on drilling within the "military mission line"—approximately 234 miles from Tampa—to provide even more protection for Florida's west coast through the year 2022. I strongly support the current ban. I also believe other states should have the right to search for energy if they wish to do so.

LETTER TO PRESIDENT BUSH

HON. DENNIS J. KUCINICH

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, May 14, 2008

Mr. KUCINICH. Madam Speaker, I sent the following letter to the President on May 13, 2008:

President GEORGE W. BUSH,
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW., Washington,
DC.

DEAR PRESIDENT BUSH: I strongly urge you to reconsider Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice's trip to the Czech Republic in early June to sign the European Ground-Based Mid-Course Defense, GMD, agreement. You have urged that the United States Ballistic Missile Defense System must include a European theatre to defend the country against an Iranian deployment of Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles, ICBM. I remain unconvinced that the arguments for the European GMD are valid.

The claim that the GMD will prevent a missile attack on the United States stands in contravention of the facts. Iran would have to overcome the many technical difficulties associated with development and deployment of long-range ballistic missiles. The longest range missile that Iran has tested is 1,600 kilometers. The straight line distance from Tehran to Washington, D.C. is 10,186 kilometers. The United States has never deployed a missile with this range. Our longest range missile, the MX or Peacekeeper, has a range of approximately 8,000 kilometers. Only five countries have deployed any long-range ballistic missiles to date.

In fact, it is conceivable that the U.S. will have its own technical difficulties to overcome before such a system can be proven viable. Two stage interceptors, proposed to be used in the European GMD, have never before been flight tested and therefore have no proven track record of viability. The Test and Evaluation department of the Pentagon cautions that many more tests under realistic conditions would be needed before conceding our capability to shoot down an offensive missile.

The citizens of the Czech Republic and Poland clearly reject the proposed agreement. Public opinion polls in the Czech Republic reflect strong opposition to the placement of the radar in their country. A poll conducted in the summer of 2007 shows that three-quarters of the population is calling for a public referendum on the proposed agreement. Opinion polls show that a consistent majority of the Polish public is opposed to the agreement and argues that they feel no particular threat from Iran. However, they indicated that the installment of interceptors would strain diplomatic relations with Russia. Similar concerns have been voiced about the prospect of Czech participation in the installment of the radar.

The GMD proposal has by some accounts exacerbated U.S.-Russia relations. The U.S. has shared information but not meaningfully cooperated with Russia in these negotiations. Because the Czech Republic and Poland fall within the boundaries of former Russian influence, U.S. actions with regard to the GMD have been perceived by Russia as an intrusion. There can be no doubt that U.S. efforts to impose the GMD are perceived as an obstruction to the diplomatic ties between our nations.

Assertions made by the Administration that the U.S. ICBM system could be used to protect the European Union reflect a flawed policy. If the Administration is concerned about the threat of ICBM attack on Europe it should cooperate with the international community to address these concerns instead of pursuing even more unilateral international policing. NATO is a better forum in which to address these concerns.

The timing of Secretary Rice's trip to sign the agreement is also questionable. The Conference Report for the FY 2008 Department of Defense, DOD, authorization requires an independent assessment of the two stage interceptors as well as an independent analysis to assess alternatives to the European GMD. The assessment will not be released until after Secretary Rice's trip. If the assessment finds the GMD and the interceptors to be as unnecessary, unviable, and counterproductive to diplomacy as I have outlined in this letter, it will make it difficult to turn back. Additionally, the December 2007 National Intelligence Estimate on Iran states that Tehran halted its nuclear program in 2003 and as such, reaffirms the lack of an impending nuclear threat to the United States from Iran. This further confirms that there is no urgent need to sign a formal agreement with the Czech Republic in June.

The viability, necessity and prudence of the fulfillment of a formal agreement with both the Czech Republic and Poland on the European GMD are called into question. Furthermore, this \$4 billion project will be solely funded by U.S. taxpayers. I urge you to cancel the upcoming trip by Secretary Rice to the Czech Republic and instead focus on the more pressing diplomatic efforts that are needed to protect U.S. security through our relationships with the international community.

Sincerely,

DENNIS J. KUCINICH,
Member of Congress.

CELEBRATING ISRAEL'S 60TH ANNIVERSARY

HON. TODD TIAHRT

OF KANSAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, May 14, 2008

Mr. TIAHRT. Madam Speaker, congratulations to the people of Israel and their forebears on the 60th anniversary of the re-establishment of the State of Israel. Born out of genocide and conflict, the modern State of Israel has developed into a free, democratic and prosperous country. An unfailing ally of the United States, Israel is a beacon of freedom and religious tolerance in the Middle East. I am honored to strongly support the modern State of Israel and reaffirm the bonds of close friendship and cooperation between the United States and Israel.

The narrow strip of land that now constitutes modern Israel has been important to the Jewish people for four millennia, and the first Jewish kingdom was established in this region over 3,000 years ago. Although forced to emigrate from the historical Jewish homeland over the centuries, the Jewish people have continuously yearned for and often returned to their home. History shows that waves of Jewish people returned to the Holy Land at the very least during the 12th, 15th, 16th, and 18th centuries. Large-scale migration back to Israel started in the late 1800s and continues through today.

On November 29, 1947, the United Nations General Assembly formally approved the partitioning of the British Mandate of Palestine and the creation of a Jewish State. On May 14, 1948, the people of Israel proclaimed the establishment of the modern State of Israel. Under the leadership of President Harry S. Truman, the United States was the first nation to recognize the State of Israel and establish full diplomatic relations.

Over the course of three wars, countless military operations, constant terrorism, and unjustified diplomatic and economic boycotts, Israel's existence has been continuously threatened. But, through it all, the Jewish people have remained vigilant and continue to build a strong and vibrant state.

Today, Israel has one of the leading economies in the Middle East, while maintaining a strong commitment to human rights, freedom of speech, press and religion, and democratic values. With open and free elections, and an independent judiciary, Israel remains the most democratic country in the region.

Since the creation of the modern State of Israel, the hallmark of the relationship with the United States has been a strong friendship. Israel has been a trusted military ally and partner for six decades. The close relationship between our governments and continued military assistance are essential for promoting democracy and peace in the Middle East and throughout the world.

In times of humanitarian need or global crisis, the United States can always count on Israel to stand close and provide assistance. From contributing search-and-rescue teams following the 1998 bombings of the American Embassies in east Africa, to providing humanitarian aid following the 2005 devastation of the