

Rothman Fights Construction of Permanent Bases in Iraq

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Rothman Continues to Fight Construction of Permanent Bases in Iraq

(Washington, DC)— With a final vote on the defense spending bill expected this week, Congressman Steve Rothman (D-NJ) and other lawmakers successfully fought to retain a ban on spending federal funds to build permanent military bases in Iraq. The prohibition has already been voted on and approved by House and Senate members. However, Republican leaders involved in drafting the final bill before it goes to the President had threatened to remove it.

In a letter to House and Senate negotiators, Rep. Rothman and 71 other lawmakers wrote: "Enacting the 'no permanent bases' provision in the defense appropriations bill will send a clear signal to the Iraqi people that we fully support their efforts to establish democracy and exercise sovereignty. By making our intentions crystal clear, we would reassure the world that Iraqis will choose their own destinies."

Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld recently testified that "We have no desire to have our forces permanently in that country," referring to Iraq. However, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice refused to offer an unequivocal statement against permanent U.S. bases in Iraq when Rep. Rothman pressed her about the issue during a Congressional hearing in April. The Congressman also raised concerns about the 14 bases the Pentagon has built in Iraq, which the Department of Defense characterizes as 'enduring.'

This letter was sent on September 21, 2006 to Reps. C.W. Bill Young (R-FL) and John Murtha (D-PA). They are the Chairman and Ranking Member of the House Appropriations Committee's Subcommittee on Defense.

As a member of the House Appropriations Committee, which makes decisions about all U.S. government spending, Rothman voted for an initial amendment prohibiting the Defense Department from entering into a long-term base agreement with the government of Iraq. The Senate passed a similar provision, which would bar the government from spending any federal funds to construct permanent military bases in Iraq. Now, the House and Senate must negotiate a final bill to be voted on and sent to the President for his signature.

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