Mr. Speaker,

I rise today to comment on the current crisis

in Kosovo. The recent death of four policemen

and 25 Albanians—followed by the March 5

assault of Servian forces against ethnic

Kosovar Albanians—has marked a new stage

in the Balkan crisis. The crackdown in Kosovo,

the southernmost province of Serbia, has escalated

the conflict between ethnic Albanians

and the Serb leadership in Belgrade. Kosovo

is home to an estimated 2 million ethnic Albanians

and fewer than 200,000 Serbs. Old ethnic

rivalries and tensions are running high in

Kosovo.

Mr. Speaker, the United States and its allies

need to take concrete steps to ensure that this

latest round of violence in the Balkans does

not spread to Albania, Macedonia, Greece and

perhaps Turkey. We should take proactive

steps by learning from recent history. We must

encourage a meaningful dialogue between

Serbs and Kosovar Albanian leaders that

leads to peaceful solutions and protects basic

human rights.

Mr. Speaker, the State Department has said

that it supports ‘‘an enhanced status for

Kosovo within the context of the Federal Republic

of Yugoslavia [Serbia/Montenegro].’’

Our position is clearly a step in the right direction.

It is responsible; it demonstrates our

commitment to a peaceful resolution to the

conflict; and it underpins our commitment to

basic human rights.

One of the deplorable legacies of the Bosnian

war is that human rights will be violated

if the international community sits back and allows

for abuses to happen. We go on record

today stating that we will not tolerate abuses

and vioience. It is wrong, and it is absurd.

The 1995 Dayton Peace Accords clearly

demonstrate that peace won’t happen without

considerable U.S. leadership. In fact, British

Foreign Secretary Robin Cook recently met

with Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic

on the issue of greater autonomy for ethnic Albanians,

and his comments are instructive:

To this end, the political leadership of the

ethnic Albanian majority in Kosovo has sought

greater independence and freedom from Serb

authorities since the early 1990s, but Serbia

has flatly rejected the idea. Serbs see Albania

as their cultural homeland. It is fitting that we

respect and appreciate the Serbs’ history but,

at the same time, we must take steps to facilitate

greater self-governance for ethnic Albanians.

They comprise at least 90% of

Kosovo’s 2 million people. For me the message

is clear: the U.S. must support fundamental

human rights in the Serbian province

of Kosovo. The ethnic Albanians deserve an

enhanced political status and a heightened degree

of autonomy. Again, autonomy, in a

word, could be an antidote for further violence

and bloodshed in the region.

Mr. Speaker, writing in Sunday’s Washington

Post, columnist Jim Hoagland helps policy

makers return to key principles in this malaise

we call the post-Cold War world. He reminds

us of the value of human dignity and our fight

for human rights. Hoagland reminds us that

the ‘‘demographic laws of gravity’’ cannot be

defied:

especially in places like the Balkans, ‘‘when

atomization is the dominant force in international

politics.’’

Mr. Speaker, I encourage my colleagues to

support H. Con. Res. 235 that calls for an end

to violent repression in Kosovo. Most of all, I

ask my colleagues to take a stand for basic

human rights and the inviolability of human

dignity.