Mr. Speaker, I too just

returned from the Republic of Macedonia,

where I participated in this 14-

member bipartisan congressional mission

to Kosovo, invited to observe presidential

and parliamentary elections in

the Republic of Kosovo. We also sought

to learn the facts surrounding the brutal

repression currently taking place in

Kosovo by the Serbs. Our mission was

simply to observe and bear witness to

the happenings in this troubled part of

the world.

Unfortunately, the Serbian leader,

Slobodan Milosevic, denied our entry

into Kosovo. Let us be clear. We

worked very diligently in advance of

this trip to ensure that we would receive

our visas to enter Kosovo. We

contacted the Yugoslav embassy in

Washington well in advance of our trip.

We submitted our visa applications and

generally provided whatever information

was needed to support this important

trip.

We waited several days for a response

to our request and called the embassy

on a daily basis to inquire into the status

of our request. The answer always

came back the same, ‘‘We are considering

it. We’ll get back to you.’’ With

still no answer, our delegation made

the decision to proceed with the hope

that we would be granted visas. Unfortunately,

we arrived in Macedonia,

which borders Kosovo, to the disappointing

news that our request had

been denied.

Why? Supposedly the reason given

was the inadequacies of the information

we provided in our visa applications

to the Yugoslav government. Perhaps

the true reason was that President

Milosevic did not want us to see

firsthand the brutal campaign of repression

he has waged against the ethnic

Albanian population of Kosovo.

Despite this denial, Mr. Speaker, we

decided to make one last effort to cross

the border. We assembled the delegation

and made our way to the nearest

border post separating Kosovo and

Macedonia. The location was a remote

one. It was extremely cold as we made

our way on foot from the Macedonian

checkpoint to the border of Kosovo.

Unfortunately, the heavily armed border

guards had no intention of allowing

us to proceed.

A CNN camera crew which was already

across the border in Kosovo was

prevented from coming down to the

border checkpoint to talk with us. We

finally gave up, Mr. Speaker, and returned

to the capital of Macedonia,

where we established an election monitoring

effort there. The election did

take place despite repression and violence

by Serb police and paramilitary

units, and the people of Kosovo elected

Ibrahim Rugova to another term as

President.

Sadly, the Serbs consider this election

an illegal one and continue to

deny the people of Kosovo basic human

rights, such as the right to choose their

own elected leaders. Mr. Speaker, the

people of Kosovo want nothing more

than to simply live and work in peace,

yet the Serbs time and again resort to

violence and repression in an effort to

maintain control over the former

Yugoslav republics.

I want my colleagues in this institution

as well as the American people to

know of our experiences in simply

seeking to observe an election and investigate

human rights abuses. I want

them to know of the violence that is

taking place right now against the people

of Kosovo.

I heard today that another half a

dozen villages have been surrounded

and there is heavy artillery up there

around these new villages that have

been surrounded. Many are dead, tens

of thousands are homeless, and scores

of towns are currently under siege by

Serbian military units. Innocent civilians

are without food and heat. It was

recently reported that six ethnic Albanians

died from starvation and cold.

I want the world to know of what is

going on in Kosovo because we must

not allow Kosovo to become another

Bosnia. Yet that is exactly what could

happen. Until now, the resistance in

Kosovo has largely been peaceful and

nonviolent. I hope and pray that it remains

that way. My greatest fear is

that the Serbian brutality and repression

results in more armed resistance

in Kosovo which will lead to only

greater violence and bloodshed.

We must not allow this to happen,

Mr. Speaker. The world community

can prevent this if it has the will to do

so.