Mr. Speaker, I rise to

address the issue of presidential decision-

making related to Kosovo.

Sometimes the challenge of leadership

is to recognize that restraint at

the outset is a better policy than entanglement

at the end.

The Balkans are a cauldron of conflict

based on a history of internecine violence

of which we on this side of the

Atlantic have little understanding or

capacity to ameliorate.

Policy in such a circumstance should

be designed to avoid being caught up in

destructive dissensions which are beyond

our ken and beyond our control.

There may be a humanitarian case

for intervening on the ground in

Kosovo as part of a small NATO peacekeeping

operation. But this case disintegrates

if we unleash air power

against one of the sides. In the wake of

air strikes, we will be barred forever

from a claim to the kind of neutral status

required of a peacekeeping participant.

More importantly, it is strategic

folly to assume civil wars can be

calmed by unleashing violence from

30,000 feet.

Teddy Roosevelt once admonished

‘‘to speak softly but carry a big stick.’’

At risk to the public interest, this

President has taken a different tack.

He has raised the rhetoric, threatening

one side that air strikes will occur if it

does not capitulate, and allowed a war

criminal, Slobadan Milosovic, to force

his hand.

Now, in part because White House

threats are either not being taken seriously

or are viewed as potentially

counterproductive, Milosovic has put

the President in a position of advocating

air strikes in order to keep his

word, even though their effect may be

more anarchistic than constraint.

The world will little note nor long remember

what most Presidents say

most of the time. But people from

every corner of the earth are taking

stock of what appears to be a too-ready

trigger hand on cruise missiles and air

power.

A question worth pondering is whether

use of such power in East Africa and

Afghanistan, for instance, precipitates

or diminishes efforts by destabilizing

powers to build weapons of mass destruction

and missile delivery systems

for themselves.

Meanwhile, the case for unleashing a

military strike in order to make a

meaningful threat meaningful should

be reconsidered.

It is time to disengage pride and review

circumstance. It is time to stop

being a bully in the use of the bully

pulpit.