Madam Speaker, I thank the gentleman very much, and

I particularly want to at this time commend the gentleman from

Pennsylvania (Mr. Weldon), although I know he never looks for that kind

of approbation because he is devoted to his duty here in the Congress

of the United States, but, nonetheless, I want to indicate the great

affection and personal regard I have for him, not only on the basis of

his commitment to his duties but on the basis of his commitment to us

here in the Congress and trying to resolve this issue in a manner that

can be seen as honorable by all parties concerned.

I would like to enter, Madam Speaker, into a little bit of a dialogue

with the gentleman from Pennsylvania on the basis that all of us who

are consumed by this issue virtually daily now may be very familiar

with the terms of our discussion, the terms of our dialogue, perhaps

even the context within which we hope a dialogue will be taking place

not only in the Congress but perhaps internationally as well; but not

all of our colleagues necessarily may be familiar with all the terms

and the individuals, all the particular contexts, and certainly those

who may review the record and hear us speaking may not be entirely

familiar. So what I would like to do, if it is all right with the

gentleman from Pennsylvania, is perhaps engage him in a bit of

discussion that will, hopefully, illuminate some of the details.

I think it is crucial for us to understand that this

is not some kind of, even if it is bipartisan, it is not some kind of a

bipartisan rump group that may have suddenly come together in an ad hoc

way, attempting to substitute itself for either the State Department or

the administration or, for that matter, the will of the Congress.

I think that is an accurate statement, and we need to flesh it out a

little bit in order to make clear that that kind of an accusation or

that kind of a conclusion that someone might draw superficially is

inaccurate.

The reason I say that it is inaccurate is there not a Duma-Congress

working group formally established between the Congress of the United

States, the House of Representatives for certain, and members of the

Duma that actually has a working relationship which, in fact, has been

taking place over some period of time now, not only in Russia but in

the very halls of the Congress.

So the individuals involved here have been those who

have expressed an interest in trying to take up the challenge that has

been

presented to us with the ending of the Cold War in order to establish

relations between Russia, not the former Soviet Union, but Russia and

the Newly Independent States with the United States of America in a

manner and in a context which will help to establish not only peaceful

relations but relations which will help to bring stability.

So this is not, in fact, a paper organization or

merely something that was signed for the pro forma effect, but rather a

working relationship that, if I remember correctly, just this year had

over in the Rayburn Building a formal meeting complete with

simultaneous translators and minutes being kept of exchanges between

the Duma and Members of the United States Congress.

And is not one of the reasons, then, that we are

trying to pursue this particular course, regardless of the individual

items right now which may not make up an agenda that we might want to

present, is it not the case, then, that what we are trying to do here

with what might be called a Balkan working group is to try to take

advantage then of the good relations that have been built up, to try to

take advantage of the opportunity that exists as parliamentarians,

fellow parliamentarians, reaching out to them to ask for them to

utilize their good offices in this instance?

It is not us dictating a particular set of terms or acting as some

kind of front men for any particular stands or positions that have been

concocted in one venue or another, but rather that we are making a

good-faith effort to reach out to in this instance particularly members

of the Duma, to ask them to utilize a diplomatic effort which has a

long history, a long and honorable history, that is to say the

utilization of good offices and in this instance with the Government of

Yugoslavia?

Yes. I had to explain myself ever since for

supporting it.

In terms of our motivation, which I think is really

sufficient just in the explanation that we have been giving right now

on the basis of this dialog, I think that is more than sufficient to

justify the effort being made.

But there may be some who are somewhat skeptical of the idea that

this is a bipartisan situation or that, regardless of the sincerity

that my colleague and I may have or others may have in association with

this, that perhaps there is going to end up a situation in which blame

will be cast and accusations will be made, fingers will be pointed.

But I think it would be fair to say, and I would be interested in the

comments of my colleague or observations on my remarks, I think it is

fair to say that we are concerned about whether or not this is going to

work both from a practical military standpoint and from the idea also

very, very important as to the future of NATO, the future of defense

alliances, the future of the

United States in terms of its credibility.

The initial premises upon which the military activity was instigated

included the prevention of ethnic cleansing, or certainly its

alleviation, the easing of tensions in the Balkan region, and the

extension of the credibility of NATO as a defensive alliance.

And I think it is fair to say for many of us in the Congress, those

premises are not only not being met but we believe that unless and

until an alternative resolution can be found, those premises are

being undermined if not actually thwarted or contradicted. And if this

situation is not resolved, if we just continue on with the bombing so

that the bombing becomes its own reason for being, then we will find

ourselves in a situation in which the Congress, at a minimum, let alone

the people of the United States, will find themselves in a position of

having to passively stand by and let events get in the saddle and ride

us.

I was smiling a bit, because the Members of the

other side, of course, are the Democrats, not the Russians.

That does highlight the point we are trying to make here that this is

an effort being made by American parliamentarians with counterparts in

the Russian Duma on the basis that we have a vehicle for discussion

that is formally established and institutionalized between the Congress

and the Russian parliament, known as the Duma, and that we want to take

full advantage of that in the interest of peace.

So while we expect the administration to do its job,

we in the Congress have a job also, we in the Congress have a

constitutional duty to perform, particularly when it comes to issues of

war and peace, when it comes to deciding budgets and deciding

directions and policies with respect to war and peace. That is, in

fact, our obligation and our duty.

So it is important I think, then, as we move towards, hopefully, some

opportunity to pursue the initiative that my colleague has outlined so

well I think it is important that we then have as the bottom-line

motivation to be understood, not only by our colleagues but by the

American people, we have as the bottom-line motivation that we want the

interests of the United States to be protected by all means, and there

is no question about that, but that the interest of the United States

of America in terms of not being an Imperial power, not being a 21st

century version of old Rome, in terms of attempting to make a good-

faith effort to secure the universal declaration of human rights in a

meaningful way, to see to it that, as American power is exercised, it

is exercised on behalf of peace and the poor and the helpless.

Those are not abstract philosophical elements as we see it, I

believe. I think I am speaking for you as well as myself under these

circumstances.

And those who are wanting to join with us in this

effort with the Russians. We are not engaged in an academic exercise.

What this is is carrying out our fundamental duty as Members of

Congress, working together on behalf of the interests of the United

States and the peace of the world, and to the degree, to any degree

that we can advance that cause, I think then that it is our solemn and

serious duty to carry forward with it. Now, I know that is acceptable

to you. I hope it is acceptable to our colleagues. That is in fact our

motivation, that is our interest, that is our intention. I trust that

at the conclusion of tonight's special order and as we moved to the

days ahead that we will be able to carry through on the task that we

have set before us. My hope is that others will join us, that this is

by no means an exclusive group or any kind of self-appointed points on

any diplomatic spear or anything of that kind. We are just reaching out

to one another in an open way with a working group based on the Duma-

Congressional relationship that we hope will succeed in at least

helping to form a foundation for a peaceful resolution of the current

situation.