Mr. Speaker, I want to say first that I stand in

wholehearted support of the brave men and women who are currently

risking their lives in this mission. I pray for their safe return. We

should all be very proud of their dedication to their country.

The ongoing situation in Kosovo represents a grave humanitarian

crisis. The government of Slobodan Milosevic has been engaging in the

systematic slaughter and oppression of the ethnic Albanians in Kosovo.

I have no quarrel with the Serbian people. The blame for the killing

and persecution lies with Milosevic and he must be stopped. The United

States cannot stand by as innocent men, women, and children are driven

from their homes and villages, while countless others are brutally

slaughtered. The history of 20th century Europe presents us with a

moral imperative, and we have no choice but to act, and act now.

This conflict is occurring in a politically volatile region in an

area of crucial importance to this country. This conflict could spread

rapidly in the Balkans, affecting our NATO allies, and that has serious

national security implications for America. If this conflict erupts

into a major European war, U.S. involvement will be massive and much

costlier than our participation in the NATO effort now underway.

Today, I plan to vote against two Resolutions being offered by my

colleague, Congressman Tom Campbell. While I have great respect for his

views, I don't feel that these Resolutions encompass our best policy

options in Kosovo.

H. Con. Res. 82 calls for the complete withdrawal of U.S. troops from

current operations in Yugoslavia. The approval of this resolution would

send a devastating message about America's commitment to NATO and to

stopping the mindless slaughter of innocent civilians. It would allow

Slobodan Milosevic to continue his policy of ethnic cleansing with

impunity. In addition, any unilateral statement by Congress against the

U.S. commitment to NATO would be especially ill-timed in light of

NATO's reaffirmed commitment this past weekend to resolving the

situation in Kosovo. Finally, I fear that this resolution would

undermine the morale of our brave troops in the field.

H.J. Res. 44 calls on the U.S. government to issue a formal

declaration of war against Yugoslavia. We have not declared war since

World War II, and such a declaration is out of proportion to the

current situation. The U.S. and NATO are seeking to stop the slaughter

of innocent people and to stabilize the region for the long term, not

the conquest of Yugoslavia. In addition, a unilateral declaration by

the U.S. would shatter the delicate coalition of 19 NATO nations who

have worked closely together to try to stop the violence that Milosevic

and his forces are committing. Yesterday, this resolution was

unanimously defeated in the International Relations Committee.

I also plan to vote against H.R. 1569, a bill that would cut off

funding for operations in Kosovo if the President deploys ``ground

elements'' without authorization. I have repeatedly voiced my hope that

a ground invasion will never be necessary, but there are a myriad of

circumstances that could necessitate the use of some ground forces. I

do not believe Congress should tie the hands of the military commanders

and risk putting our troops in any unnecessary risk.

Mr. Speaker, I will vote in favor of the resolution offered by Mr.

Gejdenson in support of continuing air strikes against Yugoslavia. This

resolution is identical to the bipartisan measure which has already

passed the Senate. I do this with reluctance and a heavy heart because

I firmly believe that military action should always be our last resort.

However, Milosevic's brutal actions and blatant refusal to negotiate

have left no other options. I sincerely hope that NATO's air campaign

will bring about a successful conclusion to this conflict, avoiding

bloodshed of innocents on all sides of this conflict, and so we can get

our troops out of harm's ways as quickly as possible.

I support this Gejdenson resolution, first and foremost, because I am

convinced that it represents the right policy. I also support it

because Congress has a unique responsibility--both constitutionally and

morally--to speak out on matters of military conflict. Whether one

supports or opposes our mission in Kosovo, it would be unconscionable

for Congress to be silent on this issue. Doing so would effectively

disenfranchise the millions of Americans who want to voice their views

on this topic through their elected representatives.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I want to express my heartfelt thanks and

gratitude to the American people for their generosity to the refugees

of Kosovo. Once again, they have responded to

a humanitarian crisis with compassion and generosity, donating food,

clothes, and money and countless hours of their time. This past weekend

I visited Direct Relief International in my district and met with

representatives from DRI, Missions Without Borders, and New Horizons

Outreach. They showed me the tons of supplies they have gathered and

are sending to the refugees. We all owe groups like this, and the

thousands of volunteers and donors across this great land who support

them, our debt of gratitude.