Mr. Speaker, I rise to express my deep concerns for the

current situation in Kosovo and the military policies being pursued by

the Clinton Administration.

Let me say at the outset that I fully support our military men and

women. They are the finest in the world. Further, in no way do I wish

to send a message to Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic that I

consider him to be anything other than a barbarian and a thug. His

policies in Kosovo of ``ethnic cleansing'' and mass deportation of the

Albanian majority are nothing short of deplorable which serve to

reinforce his pathologic quest for ultimate power and authority. There

can be no doubt that as Secretary of Defense Cohen has stated, ``Mr.

Milosevic and his minions are engaging in rape, pillage, and murder on

a scale that we have not seen since the end of World War II'' \* \* \*

``Milosevic is an ex-communist thug who has been appallingly brutal to

the Kosovo Albanians.''

Kosovo is much more than a civil war. It is in effect an extension of

what we have already experienced in Slovenia, Bosnia and Croatia. Serb

forces, including elements of the Yugoslav Army, Serb special police

and paramilitary units have attacked towns and villages

throughout Kosovo in a clear pattern similar to what we saw in Bosnia.

The world has a right to be outraged and to demand that Mr. Milosevic

end his brutal campaign of hatred and expulsion.

Like many, I do believe that the nations of Europe had the right to

decide that the situation in Kosovo was no longer tolerable and had to

be stopped before a broader war in the Balkans ensued. NATO's reason

for taking action in Kosovo is honorable. Ethnic cleansing must be

condemned. Clearly, the United States does have a national interest in

a peaceful resolution of this conflict. Peace and stability in southern

Europe is important. If the current situation persists, Montenegro

could be next and perhaps Bosnia could flare up again. The current

situation also places our friends and allies in Greece and Turkey in a

tenuous situation which could rekindle old animosities. But does the

United States have such a strategic national interest in the Balkans

that we should commit U.S. military forces to the region? I do not

believe so. Is it in the best interest of the European nations of NATO

to act to resolve this conflict? Yet it is. And, as a member of NATO,

should the U.S. participate in some way? Yes, we could. But do we need

to be in the forefront of the military operation, providing the bulk of

the air-strike forces and potentially the ground forces? I do not

believe so. If the European nations of NATO wish to intervene

militarily, I believe the U.S., as a NATO ally, can assist with

communications, intelligence, logistics, and medical support. And if

that is not enough for the NATO alliance to act in a case such as this

to enforce their own responsibilities to preserve stability in Europe,

then I question the real resolve of the alliance and wonder what kind

of an alliance we have if it cannot function without the U.S. in the

lead.

That is why I voted today to remove our air forces from the

operations over Yugoslavia and will oppose the commitment of United

States ground combat forces to Kosovo should the President decide to do

so. Last March, I voted against authorizing American ground forces to

be used as a peacekeeping force in Kosovo. I did so because NATO didn't

have a clearly defined mission or strategy to win the conflict. We also

didn't have an exit strategy. I said then that I hoped I would be

proven wrong. That hasn't been the case.

When feasible, the United States and NATO should take well thought-

out steps to stop aggression or in this case the brutal extermination

or deportation of an ethnic population. Our actions, if we are to take

them, must be swift and taken with overwhelming force. But we have done

the opposite in Yugoslavia. If we are to be intellectually honest, we

have to admit that an air war cannot stop ethnic cleansing in Kosovo.

Air wars alone have never succeeded. If we are to be intellectually

honest, we have to admit that the air war is in all likelihood a

prelude to a ground war. If we are to be intellectually honest, we have

to admit that incrementally increasing our war effort is a losing

strategy. Even General Clark, the NATO supreme commander has stated

that ``air power alone will not be sufficient to stop the ethnic

cleansing''.

Instead of stopping the ethnic cleansing in Kosovo, our strategy

seemingly has hastened it. The administration was caught off guard by

that. Milosevic has achieved most of his objectives. He has extended

his control over Kosovo, and he has successfully expelled a large

portion of the ethnic Albanian population. Now he is suggesting to

Russian negotiators that he is ready to talk peace. Perhaps this option

should be seriously reconsidered, instead of being summarily dismissed,

as the Administration has done.

If we resort now to a ground war, we risk far more casualties and an

open-ended commitment to Kosovo that could quickly become a long-time

quagmire. When we put our troops in Bosnia, the President promised they

would be home in a few months. That was four years ago, and 3,000

troops are still there. He's not saying how long our troops would be in

Kosovo. And because our mission and exit strategy remain unclear to me,

I fear that we would have to send an invasion force into Kosovo at

least as large as the one we used in the Persian Gulf and that those

forces would be required to remain in Kosovo for a very long time.

Furthermore, we are also asking our military men and women to do a

job without supplying them with the necessary tools. Today, there are

265,000 American troops in 135 countries--including 50,000 in Korea and

several thousand more in the Persian Gulf. At the same time, since the

end of the Gulf War, our military has shrunk by 40 percent. Since 1990,

the Air Force has shrunk from 36 active and reserve fighter wings to

20. The Navy is sending warships to sea hundreds of sailors short of a

full crew. The Marines and Army are running out of ammunition. If we

needed to, we would be hard-pressed to respond elsewhere in the world.

Already, we have had to divert planes from their patrol over Iraq to

fly Kosovo missions.

As we commit American troops to more hotspots around the world,

coupled with the defense cutbacks this Administration has made over

this decade, it means our tissue-thin military resources have become

even thinner.

My prayers go to the outstanding men and women in U.S. uniforms

involved in this confrontation and those facing danger throughout the

world. I have the greatest confidence in their commitment, to their

honor and in their willingness to fight for freedom. Had we given them

the tools, the strategy, and the commitment to win, I know they would

prevail in Kosovo. But we haven't. So they should no longer be engaged

and certainly should not be committed to a ground war.