Mr. Speaker, today the House considers legislation

regarding U.S. policy toward the crisis in Yugoslavia. Under our

Constitution, Congress has an important responsibility to be involved

in the conduct of foreign policy, and this is no exception. Today, I

will vote for H.R. 1569 and S. Con. Res. 21 and against H. Con. Res. 82

and H. Con. Res. 44.

There are four issues that the House of Representatives must decide

today: whether the United States should declare war on Yugoslavia;

whether the United States should withdraw its forces from the NATO led

strikes; whether Congress must pass legislation to approve any ground

troops that may be deployed by the President; and whether the President

has the support of the Congress to continue to participate in the NATO

led air campaign. These are not easy or simple decisions.

H. Con. Res. 82 would require the President to remove U.S. military

forces currently participating in Operation Allied Force. The other

proposal, H. Con. Res. 44, would declare a state of war between the

United States and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. I intend to

oppose both of these proposals.

Passage of either bill would have severe consequences for United

States foreign policy. Withdrawing U.S. troops participating in

Operation Allied Force would hand Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic

a victory and a signal that he was free to continue the policies of

ethnic cleansing and genocide. In addition, withdrawing troops would

destroy hopes for a positive outcome of current air strikes against

Serbia. Finally, the withdraw of U.S. troops may break apart the NATO

alliance. Withdrawal of troops could cause Milosevic to question our

resolve to achieve the objective of a multi-ethnic, democratic Kosovo

in which all can live in peace and security.

Conversely, declaring war would have equally devastating

consequences. The situation in Kosovo, though extremely serious, has

not developed to the point that the United States as a sovereign

country should declare war. Declaring war carries legal consequences

that include the nationalization of factories for wartime production,

as well as foreign policy consequences such as the military involvement

from other countries such as Russia. The United States has only voted

to declare war 11 times in its history, and none since World War II.

The United States should continue its participation in the NATO led

effort, but at this time, there is no compelling reason why we, as a

sovereign nation, should independently declare war on Yugoslavia.

I do intend to support H.R. 1569, which would prohibit the use of

funds appropriated to the Defense Department for deploying U.S. ground

forces in Yugoslavia unless the deployment is authorized by law. This

prohibition does not apply to ground missions that deal specifically

with rescuing U.S. military personnel or personnel of another NATO

country participating in the mission.

Normally, I do not advocate limiting the President's options in his

conduct of U.S. foreign policy, and I do have some concerns about this

legislation. For example, requiring Congressional approval of ground

troops by law could be misinterpreted by both Milosevic and our Allies

as a potential step back from the solidarity expressed at the NATO

summit. In addition, there could be practical problems in carrying out

the intent of this legislation because there are some U.S. ground

troops already in the region as part of peacekeeping forces. However,

the question of engaging U.S. ground troops in combat in Kosovo is so

serious that Congress must take an active role in making that decision.

Unfortunately, in initiating the air campaign, the Administration left

the impression that it would be over in a matter of days and that

Milosevic would immediately capitulate. Initiating the use of ground

troops is an even more serious decision and there must be full

consultation with Congress if that decision has to be made.

While the potential use of ground forces cannot be completely ruled

out, the best scenario would be that a NATO ground force--predominantly

made up of European-NATO forces--would escort refuges back to Kosovo

after the Yugoslav forces voluntarily withdraw or they are forced to

withdraw as a result of the NATO air campaign. The ramifications of the

use of ground forces must be fully studied and debated by Congress and

conveyed to the American people. Regardless of what steps are necessary

and what measures are passed by the House of Representatives today, I

would urge the president to make sure he prepares the American people

for any role he may ask of our military personnel.

Finally, I also intend to support S. Con. Res. 21 which authorizes

the president to conduct military air operations and missile strikes

against Yugoslavia. The United States must continue to work to insure

that our NATO allies do their part and that our burden does not grow

disproportionately. At the same time, we cannot escape the fact that we

are the world's only real superpower and thus the only nation that has

certain military, logistical and humanitarian capabilities. Each day

brings more grim statistics regarding the treatment of ethnic Albanians

in Kosovo. Since February of 1998, Milosevic has used force to kill

more than 2,000 ethnic Albanians and has displaced at least 400,000.

Since NATO's air campaign began, Milosevic has escalated his violence

against ethnic Albanians and they have been killed and tortured and

driven from their homes and families. The United States, as a member of

NATO, has a responsibility to step in to try to stop the killing of

innocent civilians.

In our Constitution, the Founding Fathers envisioned full

consultation by the President with Congress whenever the U.S. would

send troops into a conflict. It is never easy to ask American men and

women to leave their family and friends to risk their lives to protect

the peace of another country. When the President decides to send U.S.

troops into harm's way, he should seek the full backing of Congress and

the American public. I am pleased that we have been given this chance

to debate the situation in Kosovo today.