Mr. Speaker, it would be difficult, and probably

inappropriate, for me to publicly express the despair I feel over our

policy in the Balkans. With noble motives, we have waded into complex,

ancient hatreds, and we have only aggravated the situation. In a place

and situation where the United States has no vital national security

interests, we have become deeply involved. We have staked the

credibility of the United States and NATO on achieving an acceptable

solution where none may exist.

I did not believe that the U.S. should participate in a peacekeeping

force and voted accordingly on March 11. I did not support U.S.

involvement in the air campaign which is now underway. It is very

tempting to vote to require that our forces be withdrawn immediately

from this conflict.

Yet, whatever differences we may have with past decisions, we are

where we are. Where we are today is that we are left with no good

options. That is particularly true with the provisions upon which we

are forced to vote today.

I believe it would be better not to have these votes today. I do not

want the outcome of a vote to be seen as authorizing an escalation in

the conflict without clear objectives and the will to carry it through

until those objectives are achieved. But neither do I want any vote to

be seen as undercutting the efforts of the brave men and women

conducting the current air offensive. Nor do I wish for any vote to

give comfort to Mr. Milosevic.

Two of the votes today are on resolutions submitted pursuant to the

War Powers Act. As I noted during debate related to Bosnia a year ago,

I believe that the War Powers Act is unconstitutional.

Section 5(c) of the War Powers Act attempts to give Congress

authority to force the President to remove U.S. forces by passing a

concurrent resolution. The Supreme Court's 1983 Chada decision struck

down a similar provision, and most scholars and observers believe that

section 5(c) is also unconstitutional because it would require the

President to remove troops by a concurrent resolution, which require

the signature of the President.

I believe that the War Powers Act is unconstitutional on broader

grounds as well, as I detailed in the debate last year. I will vote

against both War Powers Resolutions because I believe that the Act is

unconstitutional and because I do not believe it is prudent for

Congress to declare war against Yugoslavia or to force the immediate

withdrawal of all U.S. forces from an ongoing NATO military operation.

Congress certainly has the constitutional authority to restrict

funding for a military operation. While I have real concern about any

measure which takes a military option off of the table, I believe that

the Administration should get Congressional approval before using

ground troops in this conflict. Therefore, I will vote for the

provision requiring prior authorization for use of ground forces,

although I do so with some hesitation.

Mr. Speaker, I continue to harbor some hopes that a negotiated

solution to this conflict can be found through the efforts of Russia

and others. Certainly, we should carefully consider the consequences of

any U.S. action upon a number of factors, including: U.S. credibility

and the effectiveness of our deterrent now and into the future; the

reaction of other significant powers, especially Russia; the best

interests of the refugees and of the people still in Kosovo; long-term

stability in the Balkan region; the effects on the NATO alliance; and

the consequences for the military position of the United States around

the world.

Today, the United States finds itself in a quagmire which may be only

a taste of what's to come. I hope that an honorable solution can be

achieved, but I am not sure that any of the measures we consider today

will move us any closer to that goal. I also hope that our nation can

come to a clear understanding and establish guidelines for the proper

role of the United States and of NATO in a complex world and especially

for the circumstances under which we are willing to risk the lives of

the men and women who defend our nation and our freedoms.