Mr. Speaker, I guess some could debate the timing of this

debate today, but let us not be confused. Our founders really did

believe that one man should not have the authority to send our people

to war. That is why the Constitution of the United States involves the

Congress of the United States, because it is through the Congress of

the United States that the people of this country are recognized, their

opinions are recognized. So this idea that we are meddling is something

our people do not understand if we take that position. The people

deserve to be involved in terms of committing our men and women to an

armed military conflict.

In addition, one could make the case that we could intervene in a

civil war if, in fact, we could be successful. The fact is, the civil

war in Kosovo has been raging on since 1389, since the 14th century.

That is six centuries' worth of internal fighting, ethnic conflict,

religious strife.

The fact is, our intervening in the middle of an ethnic religious

civil war that has gone on for six centuries is not likely to be

successful. We found this out when we intervened in Somalia. We

furthermore found this out when we intervened in Lebanon, even under

Ronald Reagan. Being in the middle of civil wars that are not

resolvable is a mistake for a major power.

The question is when, then, should we intervene militarily? Well, on

three grounds. One, when it is in the direct national interests of the

United States. Number two, when there is an absolute achievable goal.

And number three, when there is a credible exit strategy. None of these

criteria can be met in terms of Kosovo. There is no direct national

interest, there is not an achievable goal, and finally, there is no

credible exit strategy.

If we continue down this road of open-ended military commitments,

what we will do is diminish our power. Some people accuse those who are

opposed to Kosovo of being isolationists. It is just the opposite. I am

a robust internationalist, but what I do know is there must be a

balance between military and diplomatic means when it comes to

resolving these international problems. If the United States wants to

be the policeman of the world, we will find that we will diminish

ourselves over the long run and we will find when it is necessary to

act against terrorism or to provide worldwide stability in some part of

this world, we will be too spread out, we will be too thin, and we will

not be able to be effective. That is the prescription for the eroding

of a national power of a superpower status into the 21st century.

So, what do we do now? Well, the first thing we do not do is to step

on the accelerator. We should not introduce ground troops; we should

not escalate the violence. Dropping bombs in a region of the world

where fighting has been going on for six centuries and thinking that by

more violence we will impose a solution on people in that region is, I

believe, false. In fact, to put troops on the ground reinforces a

failed policy that is frankly a sign of arrogance.

What should we do? Mediate. We ought to look for a third party that

can help us to be able to restore stability, Democratic institutions,

and build an economy in that region. We should not let ego or we should

not let reputations stand in the way of reaching an agreement that will

send the refugees home, stabilize the world, and be able to continue

the superpower status of the United States by making good choices of

when we should intervene and when we should not.