Mr. Speaker, this resolution has a noble purpose in that

it attempts to assert the role of the Congress in any decision to

commit American forces to a ground war in Kosovo. It does so, however,

in the wrong way and at the wrong time. It prohibits deployment of

ground elements unless Congress specifically authorizes deployment by

law.

I represent one of the soldiers who is held captive today in

Yugoslavia, Stephen Gonzalez, of Huntsville. If this resolution had

been the law on March 31 when those three were captured, this

resolution would have prevented our forces from pursuing the captors of

those three American soldiers. Mr. Speaker, line 24, page 2 of the bill

makes it very clear, the only exception is to recover someone who is a

member of an air crew.

Mr. Speaker, this bill also approaches this issue not only in the

wrong way, but at the wrong time. It prohibits deployment of ground

elements in a way that sends a very bad signal to President Milosevic.

The threat of the use of ground troops should be on the table, because

it sends a message of NATO resolve to Milosevic, a message that he must

hear.

Contrary to promoting the congressional interest in bringing a just,

diplomatic settlement to the Yugoslavian conflict, this resolution

makes diplomatic settlement more difficult and strengthens the hand of

President Milosevic. It increases the likelihood of the campaign of

ethnic cleansing and suffering being waged against innocent people for

a prolonged period of time.

Mr. Speaker, the President said today that he will seek the support

of this Congress if he makes the decision to send ground troops into a

major deployment in Kosovo. I believe that we need to take him at his

word and we need to reject this resolution, which could do harm both to

American troops and to our national interests.