Mr. Speaker, I apologize to the Members on my side for

not being able to recognize them, but we do not have enough time. As a

matter of fact, I am revising and extending my own remarks because I

have not got the necessary time to deliver what I would like to deliver

at this time.

I rise in support of H.R. 1569 to prohibit the use of Department of

Defense funds for the deployment of U.S. ground forces in Yugoslavia

absent a specific Congressional authorization. Since the initial 1995

deployment of U.S. forces to Bosnia, I have opposed the use of ground

troops in the Balkans, and I continue to do so today.

First and foremost, my opposition is based on the recognition that

our military forces have been reduced so dramatically over the past

decade that an enlarged, open-ended commitment in the Balkans will

unquestionably jeopardize our ability to protect U.S. interests in

other critical regions of the world where the threat is serious and

imminent. Prior to the beginning of Operation ``Allied Force,'' the

Joint Chiefs of Staff had assessed the ability of U.S. armed forces to

execute our own national military strategy as entailing ``moderate to

high risk.'' This risk has grown worse over the past several months as

we have poured scarce military resources and assets into the Balkans.

Just today I read an article in Jane's Defense Weekly indicating that

the Joint Chiefs are on the verge of changing their assessment of this

risk from ``high'' to ``very high.'' As General Shelton, the chairman

of the Joint Chiefs of staff, and every theater commander-in-chief have

testified, ``risk'' in this context means longer wars and significantly

higher casualties.

Based on planning efforts last fall, defeating the Serb army on the

ground in Yugoslavia would require a NATO force of 200,000 ground

troops or more. While NATO plans have not specified what percentage of

such a force would be Americans, precedent tells me that such a NATO

force would include tens of thousands of U.S. ground troops--at least

several divisions' worth.

The implications of U.S. ground troops serving even as peacekeepers

or as part of an international occupation force would have serious

consequences for our broader global interest.

Administration policy-makers are currently discussing a possible NATO

occupation force in Kosovo that would be roughly the same size as the

force initially deployed to Bosnia. That force included 60,000 NATO

troops, about 20,000 of which were American. This size American ground

contingent would, directly or indirectly, one way or another, involve

much of the active Army. Rotating such a large ground force through

Kosovo, with no near-term prospect of withdrawal, combined with the

ongoing deployments in Bosnia, would make it all but impossible for the

Army to play its essential role in fighting and winning two major

regional conflicts in places like Korea and the Persian Gulf--in other

words, to be able to execute the national military strategy.

Tying down a large U.S. ground force in the Balkans will cause our

friends--and our enemies--to legitimately question our ability to

protect and promote our interests and to remain a force for stability

in other critical regions of the world. How will Saddam Hussein gauge

our ability to defend Kuwait if much of our Army is stuck in the

Balkans? Will we be able to rapidly reinforce South Korea in the event

of an attack by the North? Would we be able to effectively react to an

escalating crisis or conflict in the Taiwan Strait? The answers to

these questions are far from reassuring, and should concern us all.

In anticipation of the inevitable and oversimplified response that we

surely cannot abandon our commitment to NATO, let me just say that I am

not suggesting that the United States would walk away from its

responsibilities or should not play a critical role in any NATO

combined air and ground campaign if the alliance heads down this

controversial path.

While I remain strongly opposed to the commitment of U.S. ground

troops in the Balkans, we should not lose sight of the reality that the

United States is leading the air war and would continue to do so in the

event of a ground campaign. In addition, the United States is currently

providing the vast majority of the operation's strategic lift,

communications, logistics and intelligence support. Is this shirking

our responsibilities to NATO? Can anyone honestly say we are failing to

do our fair share? I do not think so.

We simply cannot afford to ignore our interests and the growing

threats around the world by allowing ourselves to fall into the trap

set

by our allies, as happened in Bosnia, that NATO military operations

cannot succeed and the alliance will fall apart unless U.S. ground

troops are leading the way. If we continue to view the Balkans in

isolation from the rest of what is becoming an increasingly dangerous

world, we do so at our own peril.

Mr. Speaker, there's an old adage that says, ``When you're in a hole,

stop digging.'' We've already dug ourselves a big hole in Bosnia and we

ought to think twice before we dig that hole deeper in Kosovo. Unless

some balance is restored between the nation's diplomatic and foreign

policy commitments and the ability of U.S. armed forces to underwrite

them, history is likely to look back on the post-Cold War world ``peace

dividend'' as resulting in a more dangerous world in which America's

credibility and resolve were put to the test with alarming frequency.

Mr. Speaker, I would just like to say simply, in closing, that I

support this resolution. I have been opposed to ground troops in Bosnia

under any conditions. As a matter of fact, we should not even be in the

Balkans. The national security of this country is not at stake. Even

for those who think that it is, it does not rise to the level of

importance that other areas of this world do, and we are unprepared to

defend against the many serious threats we have in other parts of the

world today. This further lessens our ability to defend against these

threats. And for that reason, I oppose sending ground troops into this

area.