Mr. Speaker, I rise in opposition to H.R. 1569, a bill

to prohibit the funding of ground elements in Yugoslavia without prior

Congressional authorization.

Let me be clear. If at some point in the future our military

commanders determine that ground troops are necessary to achieve our

military objectives in Yugoslavia, I believe Congress ought to vote on

their deployment. This bill, however, extends far beyond that simple

objective and could seriously jeopardize the security of U.S. forces

currently in the region.

This bill does not just prohibit the funding of ground troops prior

to Congressional authorization, but rather prohibits the funding of all

U.S. ground ``elements'' in Yugoslavia. This ill-defined language would

create a legal quagmire for the U.S. forces already deployed in the

Balkans. For example, would this bill prohibit the funding of Apache

maintenance crews in Albania because the Apache is as an air-to-ground

weapon that is deployed in Yugoslavia? It is an open question. There is

no question, however, that this bill would legally prohibit U.S. forces

in the region from launching a preemptive strike against forces in

Yugoslavia even if they received intelligence that they were about to

be attacked. If Yugoslavia were to attack beyond its borders, this bill

would legally prohibit U.S. forces from carrying the battle into

Yugoslavia even if our military commanders considered such action vital

to the protection of American troops.

In the name of protecting U.S. troops, Mr. Speaker, this bill

actually endangers the brave men and women who are already serving in

the region. I support Congressional approval before ground troops are

deployed in a hostile environment, but I cannot support legislation

that ties the hands of our nation's military commanders. For this

reason, I oppose H.R. 1569 and I urge my colleagues to do the same.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me this

time.

I have a great deal of respect for our new colleague, the gentlewoman

from New Mexico (Mrs. Wilson) and her unique expertise, but I flat out

disagree with her in a couple of important respects. I believe it is

ludicrous to assume that but for the NATO air campaign, Slobodan

Milosevic would not have turned 1 million people out of their homes. He

could not, Mr. Speaker, forcibly evict 1 million people from their

homes in 2 weeks without having

a very thoroughly developed plan well in advance. Do not kid

yourselves. This was on the game plan of Slobodan Milosevic and would

have occurred irrespective of the NATO air campaign.

I also disagree with my colleague in believing that it is time to

pack it in, to let Slobodan Milosevic have his evil way. The

gentlewoman from New Mexico supported that approach in a vote earlier

today and it was rejected. We must now stand together, just like

happened in the Senate, in a bipartisan way, to support the air

campaign.

A vote for this resolution, Mr. Speaker, is a vote for our troops, a

vote for NATO, a vote for American leadership and a vote to end the

ethnic slaughter in Kosovo. Children and the elderly are dying by the

side of the road today as Serb forces shove them to the border.

Thousands and thousands of young men have disappeared, many more

murdered perhaps right now, even as I am speaking. We cannot turn our

back on this dimension of ethnic cleansing.

While we send an unequivocal message to Milosevic, let us send with

this resolution an equally clear message to our troops and all of the

troops, Americans and others, involved in the NATO engagement. We need

to support our troops and can do so with this resolution.

I regret and regret very much we have no alternatives but to continue

with this intervention. It is now our only option. I urge my

colleagues' support.