Mr. Speaker, at the outset, let me say this Congress is

unified in its support for our military when involved in operations

around the world. The men and women in uniform have our full and

unequivocal support. With that said, I have deep reservations about the

foreign policy of this administration that is now being conducted by

the military in Operation Allied Force.

Two weeks ago, Defense Secretary Bill Cohen and Joint Chiefs Chairman

General Hugh Shelton testified before the House Armed Services

Committee to try to explain the Clinton Administration's policy and

objectives in Kosovo. Specifically, why this Balkan civil war is vital

to America's national security interests and to define the end game. I

regret to say they were not convincing. Moreover, it is very apparent

that there is no end game--no exit strategy. I voted against sending

our troops into this internal conflict, and unless a compelling case is

made, I will continue to oppose sending in U.S. ground forces into

Kosovo.

It is clear that the President chose to ignore the professional

advice of the military leadership, and sided with his foreign policy

team who made this into a humanitarian plea. Frankly, I think the air

campaign may have

precipitated the ethnic cleansing and suffering in Kosovo.

We have interjected ourselves into a centuries-old conflict, where

both the Serbs and Albanians have each been the aggressor over Kosovo.

By virtue of Operation Allied Force targeting Serbia assets, we are

siding with the KLA (Kosovo Liberation Army) which has strong ties to

organized crime, gun running, drug trafficking and international

terrorist groups like Bin Laden. With the Administration's mishandling

of the Balkan crisis, I can only think of the old saying that ``those

who fail to remember the lessons of history, are destined to repeat its

mistakes.''

To compound matters, this is the first time in NATO's history, a

defensive coalition by charter, that military action has been conducted

against a sovereign nation over internal strife. While there is

consensus among the 19 member nations of NATO for the Air Campaign,

there is no consensus about a ground campaign. It's evident that

Milosevic has not been deterred by only an air campaign. An assessment

has been made that more than 200,000 troops would be needed to invade

Serbia, yet no ground plan even exists. President Clinton is leading

our nation down the path of ``mission creep'' that will suck our

military into a quagmire that resembles Vietnam--a situation that

America has vowed never to repeat.

Mr. Speaker, we have an opportunity to prevent Operation Allied Force

from becoming a full blown war if we act now. The European Union must

step up to the plate and assert its responsibility for its own region.

If the EU determines that the strife between the Serbs and Kosovar

Albanians warrants military intervention, so be it; they can proved the

forces.

Diplomacy is still an option. Russian efforts to broker a settlement

in Kosovo were never allowed to succeed; these effort should be

vigorously pursued. We must re-examine all of these options before we

go down this path of no return; support the resolution HR 1569.