Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong opposition to H.

Con. Res. 82 which would direct the President to remove our armed

forces from their positions in connection with the present operations

against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

Mr. Speaker, a congressional vote to withdraw U.S. forces from the

mission in Kosovo would severely undermine the entire NATO effort to

stem President Milosevic's brutal campaign of ethnic cleansing against

the Kosovar Albanian population.

Mr. Speaker, the withdrawal of U.S. troops right now would also

undermine our other stated objectives in the conflict.

One of the reasons we decided to act in the first place was to

prevent a wider conflict in the region from erupting. That was and

still remains our goal. A withdrawal right now would greatly undermine

that objective by putting the stability of the Balkans in grave

jeopardy and, more broadly, the security of southern Europe.

We would also leave hundreds of thousands of refugees homeless and

over 1.2 million displaced persons exposed to continued ethnic

cleansing in Kosovo, a situation we will not tolerate. Just last

weekend, leaders of the NATO alliance meeting here in Washington

reaffirmed their commitment and resolve to maintain the air campaign

against Yugoslavia until several key conditions were met. A vote now

for unilateral U.S. withdrawal flies in the face of the NATO show of

resolve.

Mr. Speaker, over the years many voices in this Chamber have called

for greater burden-sharing by our allies. Our allies now are

shouldering a great deal of the responsibility in this conflict. A

unilateral troop withdrawal at this time would send the wrong signal to

them that we are not willing to hold up our fair share of the burden.

Mr. Milosevic must not doubt our resolve to achieve the objective of a

multi-ethnic, democratic Kosovo in which all can live in peace and

security. Mr. Milosevic alone has the power to end this conflict by

immediately stopping the violence and bloodshed, withdrawing his

military police and paramilitary forces from Kosovo and allowing all

refugees to return under an international security presence.

Mr. Speaker, make no mistake. A vote withdrawing our troops is a vote

against our troops and the vital mission they are currently

undertaking. I strongly urge my colleagues to vote against this

resolution.