Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong opposition to House

Joint Resolution 44 which asks our colleagues for a declaration of war

by the United States against the Government of the Republic of

Yugoslavia. Although I have the greatest respect for the author of the

resolution, the gentleman from California (Mr. Campbell) and certainly

a dear friend, I must respectfully oppose the resolution.

Mr. Speaker, America's Founding Fathers, in their wisdom,

deliberately drafted the Constitution to provide flexibility in the use

of U.S. armed forces abroad. The President, as Commander in Chief,

clearly has the authority to send our forces into potentially hostile

situations without a declaration of war. In fact, since 1798 in our

conflict with France over the Dominican Republic, to our air strikes in

Afghanistan and Sudan against Bin Laden in 1998, CRS, the Congressional

Research Service, has documented over 270 instances where America's

Presidents have sent U.S. armed forces abroad into hostile situations.

Over two centuries, and only five of these instances has the Congress

actually declared war.

Mr. Speaker, a declaration of war is neither necessary nor

appropriate for our actions in Kosovo and Serbia. Our Nation and NATO

are not at war with Yugoslavia. We are there to stop a sociopathic

criminal from committing genocide against his Albanian citizens,

actions which threatened to destabilize the Balkan nations, as well as

Europe. A unilateral U.S. declaration of war would irresponsibly

escalate the conflict, undermine our alliance with our NATO partners,

and needlessly jeopardize our already tense relations with Russia.

As a Vietnam veteran, Mr. Speaker, I have seen the violence of

conflict, and it is not pretty. However, there are certain times when

America must act because no other country can provide the leadership

that we can. Almost a quarter of a million innocent people died from

Milosevic's handiwork in Bosnia which Europe could not stop alone.

Mr. Speaker, the call to action has come again, and America cannot

stand idly by and let this madman continue with his genocidal campaign

in Kosovo. The stakes are too high to play political games. I strongly

urge our colleagues to defeat the resolution before us and support our

armed forces in Kosovo and Serbia that are fighting to protect against

these evil forces that Milosevic provides.

Mr. Speaker, are we willing to allow China and Russia perhaps to take

the lead in providing the leadership in global issues that affect all

human beings on this planet? I dare not say, Mr. Speaker. Let America

become the leader of the world as it should be in this issue affecting

the Balkan area.

Mr. Speaker, there have been only five instances in our nation's

history that formal declarations of war were made by the Congress--the

War of 1812 against England; the War of 1846 against Mexico; the War of

1898 against Spain; World War I and World War II. Mr. Speaker, there

are ample precedents set not only by this President but by previous

administrations as well, whereby acts of war have been always been part

and parcel of U.S. foreign policies and security interests--I believe

the Founding Fathers of this nation purposely placed the critical

issues of war as a political and public policy matter rightfully as a

matter to be decided by both the Administration and the Congress.

Mr. Speaker, the crisis in Yugoslavia is not an American issue--it is

a serious matter taken collectively with our Nation Allies. It is a

matter that history has given all those European countries to seriously

consider the alternative, if Milosevic is allowed to continue his

policy of ethnic cleansing and atrocities by murdering and killing well

over 300,000 human beings in that country, and the displacement of some

3.5 million persons now as refugees because of Milosevic's military

activities in Yugoslavia.

Mr. Speaker, am I to believe now that the most powerful nation on

this planet is telling the world that the crisis in Yugoslavia is not

in our national interest? If so, then why did the Congress allow our

President to intervene and for which he provided a negotiated

settlement on the Bosnia matter? Our President did his best to

negotiate a settlement with Milosevic, but Milosevic refused and the

bombing of Milosevic's military resources and related facilities was

the only option left--simply to prevent more reckless killings and

atrocities committed by Milosevic and his military forces.

Mr. Speaker, this is not the time to tell the world and our NATO

allies that we have now Americanized this conflict by officially

declaring a war against Yugoslavia. Vote this resolution down.