Mr. Speaker, this evening the House had an emotionally

charged debate about our policy in Kosovo, and contrary to remarks made

after the vote, this was not a vote against the troops. This was a vote

against the policy of this administration. All of us support the troops

and the young men and women who are doing their duty.

But I think it is also sad. I understand that people become so

emotionally charged that, if they lose, they automatically say this was

a partisan vote, and I understand that. But I think it is important to

remember that these are very serious issues, and all of us have very

strong feelings about them, and we may not all agree with the views of

others.

But I think, as we debate U.S. involvement in Kosovo, it is important

to remember that there has been political and religious turmoil in

Kosovo since at least 1389. The Muslim forces of the Ottoman Empire

defeated Serb forces on the plains of Kosovo at a place called the

Field of Black Birds, and Kosovo has been a sacred place for Muslims

and Orthodox Serbs for generations. It is unimaginable really that

either group would ever be forced to leave a place they consider their

homeland.

Now today in the New York Times and other national magazines our

military commanders of NATO acknowledged that 5 weeks of intensive

bombing has failed to reduce the size of the Serbian forces in Kosovo

or in their operations against Albanians. The 4,423 bombing sorties may

have rendered Serb air defenses ineffective, but air strikes have not

accomplished the stated purpose, to stop the ethnic cleansing of the

Kosovars. However innocent civilians in Belgrade, in Kosovo and other

locations throughout Serbia and Yugoslavia have been killed by NATO air

strikes, and the number of civilian casualties and incidents of

misdirected weapons continues to increase. Relentless bombing has

become ineffective, and the more it continues, the more innocent

civilians are going to be killed and injured in Kosovo and in Serbia,

and certainly a military action in which the only victims are civilians

will not be long supported by the world community.

Now I do not think we should mislead the American people. We already

are in a quagmire in Yugoslavia, and there is no easy way out, and it

is very complex.

But in my view, and the reason that I have voted against the

resolution this evening, because we have all sat by and we have watched

these relentless air strikes that are totally destroying the

infrastructure of Yugoslavia, and in the near future they are going to

be coming back to America to help rebuild the country; but the reason I

voted against the resolution tonight giving the President authority to

continue these air strikes is because I believe that at this point

America only has two options. One is an all-out ground war with air

support to recapture Kosovo.

Now, this option would require over 75,000 ground troops, casualties

would be inevitable, and troop presence would be essential to protect

Kosovars for a long time once the war was completed.

The other option is a diplomatic solution. The goal of NATO should be

to return the Kosovars to Kosovo. A military presence will be required

to assure their safety, and, of course, Serbian forces must be removed.

Now, there have been some indications recently that Mr. Milosevic may

accept and be willing and required to accept the presence of foreign

troops in Kosovo. In fact, he alluded to that in a recent interview

with C-SPAN.

So I think that we have a real opportunity here through the Russians,

through our NATO allies, through others that have contacts with Mr.

Milosevic, to push this opportunity. I

hope the President and his advisers will pursue a diplomatic solution

as soon as possible to end this situation.