Mr. President, I rise

today to express my grave concern, and

that of my constituents, regarding the

escalating violence in Kosovo. Fighting

between Serbs and the majority ethnic-

Albanian population in Kosovo has

been on-going since Kosovo was declared

to be part of Serbia in 1989.

Mr. President, I am deeply concerned

about the safety of ethnic Albanians,

many of whom have been murdered or

forced to flee their homes by the ethnically-

motivated attacks by the minority-

Serb population. I am also concerned

that this latest round of ethnic

fighting in the Balkans could reignite

unrest throughout the region.

The fighting intensified in late February

of this year, and has been spiraling

across Kosovo ever since. During

the weekend of February 28 alone, approximately

30 people were killed

there. When ethnic Albanians marched

in the provincial capital of Pristina to

protest these killings, they were met

by Serb riot police armed with water

cannon, clubs, and tear gas.

Since this latest wave of fighting

began, a total of more than 200 ethnic

Albanians, including women and children,

have been killed, and more than

10,000 have fled into neighboring Albania.

In early March, 22 members of the

Jashari family were massacred on their

farm in Prekaz. During the last weekend

in May, at least 39 people were

killed. These are but a few examples of

the senseless bloodshed that has occurred

in Kosovo during the last three

months.

Day after day, the world is witness to

this brutal fighting through television

and print media coverage of the events

in Kosovo. We saw the pictures from

the massacre at Prekaz. We have seen

soldiers in helicopters shooting at people

trying to flee across the border into

Albania. These pictures have an eerie

resemblance to those from Bosnia,

Rwanda, and other places where ethnic

fighting has occurred in this decade.

The latest wave of fighting in Kosovo

has been marked by an increase in violence

and militancy. There is no question

that there have been casualties on

both sides of this conflict. What is

troubling, however, is that very few of

these casualties have been combatants

fighting for their cause. Instead, the

majority of the dead have been innocent

civilians, many of them women

and children. And most of these civilians

have been killed simply because

they happened to be Albanian.

I am pleased that the United States

has contributed funding to the Yugoslav

War Crimes Tribunal to begin an

investigation into the involvement of

Serbian forces in the violence in

Kosovo.

I am also pleased that U.S. envoys

Richard Holbrooke and Robert Gelbard,

who traveled to the region last month,

have been able to bring the two sides to

the table to discuss their differences.

I was pleased that the first round of

talks between Yugoslav President

Slobodan Milosevic and Kosovo Albanian

leader Ibrahim Rugova, which

took place on May 15, opened a dialogue

between the ethnic Albanians

and the Serb government in Belgrade.

I was also hopeful that the May 29

meeting between President Clinton and

Mr. Rugova would bolster attempts to

reach a diplomatic solution to this ongoing

crisis.

Unfortunately, the promise of the

May 15 talks has been followed by continuing

violence and attacks on civilians

by the Serbian police and military.

Today, the United States joined

the European Union in issuing a ban on

all new investment in Serbia and by

freezing the assets of the Milosevic

government. The U.S. had delayed the

implementation of these sanctions

prior to the May 15 talks, but now

there is little choice but to impose

these sanctions. I hope that these sanctions

will help to stem the violence and

bring the two sides back to the table.

The leaders on all sides of this conflict

should not allow the escalating violence

to derail plans for negotiations.

While there remain many issues to resolve,

I believe that only through continuing

negotiations can a sustainable

settlement be ironed out. I hope that

people on all sides of this conflict are

able to put aside their feelings of nationalism

and ethnic pride and work

together to achieve a peaceful solution

to this situation before more innocent

blood is shed, and before the fighting

spreads into other areas of the Balkans.