Mr. President, I listened

to the Senator from Texas and, I

must say, there are many Members of

the Senate who have concerns about a

range of these issues. But I will also

say that one of my concerns is that as

sensitive negotiations occur in Belgrade

today with Mr. Holbrooke and

others, a resolution that says ‘‘The

United States national security interests

in Kosovo do not rise to a level

that warrants military operations’’

seems not to be the best of timing.

I understand all the points the Senator

made. As she knows, we have had

some discussions about NATO in the

past. I am someone who voted against

expanding NATO for a number of reasons.

But NATO does exist. This country

is a part of NATO, and NATO has

indicated to Mr. Milosevic that there

are consequences to his actions. The

actions he has taken obviously include

the slaughter of innocent civilians.

I am troubled, I guess, by having a

resolution on the floor of the Senate at

this moment. There will be a time and

should be a time for a robust and aggressive

discussion about what exactly

is in our national security interest.

I was someone who was nervous

about Bosnia. I would characterize the

circumstances in Bosnia differently

than the Senator from Texas did. There

is not just a cease-fire there, there is a

peace agreement in Bosnia, and this

country went to Bosnia as a peacekeeper,

not a peacemaker. We did not

send American troops into Bosnia to

create a peace that did not exist. We

sent American troops in as part of a

NATO contingent in Bosnia to keep a

peace that already existed. Those of us

who were watching what happened in

Bosnia understood genocide was occurring

in that area. We got involved

through NATO. Frankly, it has worked

to this point in a manner that has undoubtedly

saved the lives of many in

that region.

The Kosovo issue is, in many ways,

as difficult and perhaps more difficult,

and I do not know that airstrikes will

have any impact at all. I honestly do

not know. The Senator from Texas indicates

that the President should consult

with Congress, and she is absolutely

correct about that. I know that

there was a meeting on Friday. I was

invited to a meeting at the White

House on Friday, as were a number of

my colleagues. I believe a bipartisan

group of Members of Congress were at

the White House on Friday when the

President discussed the circumstances

in Kosovo.

I, too, think consultation on these

matters is required. Also required is a

significant and robust debate about exactly

what is in this country’s national

interest. The Senator from Texas has

been very consistent on raising these

questions over a long period of time.

However, it bothers me some that the

timing of this particular amendment

comes at exactly the moment that

there are these discussions today in

Belgrade with President Milosevic

about the consequences of continuing

to do what he is doing. Obviously, anybody

has a right to offer any amendment.

But I was, frankly, surprised to

see the amendment that has been offered

as a second-degree amendment. I

understand that there will be a vote on

a cloture motion tomorrow at 2:15 on

this second-degree amendment. And

this is a very difficult time for us to be

essentially sending this message to Mr.

Milosevic. If I might reclaim my

time, the timing here is more than

‘‘less than perfect,’’ as the Senator suggested.

If I were involved in negotiations

this afternoon in Belgrade with

Mr. Milosevic, the Lott amendment

would be of great concern to me, because

I would expect that someone sitting

across the table from me would

say, ‘‘Well, you are offering threats of

airstrikes, but I can tell you that at

this moment there is legislation pending

in the U.S. Senate to prohibit those

very strikes you’re suggesting represent

the threat to me.’’

I only say that I wish at this point

we could have found a way—or could

still find a way—to have the kind of debate

about what is in the national security

interest, what is the role of

NATO, all of the kinds of discussions

that the Senator suggests. Clearly,

those are discussions we should and

will have. But I rose simply to say I

think the timing of this amendment

detracts from the ability of our negotiators

to express the threat of NATO

action.

If I were negotiating for our side, debating

this amendment is probably the

last sort of thing I would want to see

happen, because I don’t think it serves

our negotiating interests.

I do not say that personally in terms

of anybody who offered this. The Senator

from Texas indicated that she introduced

this discussion in the Appropriations

Committee, of which I am a

member. She is correct about that. But

this most recent amendment was laid

down, I believe, Friday, and a cloture

motion filed on Friday; and that is

what I am concerned about. I would just point out,

sending American men and women into

harm’s way is something I think no

President wants to do. We’ve had illfated

incursions and actions taken by

Republican Presidents and Democratic

Presidents alike. The perfection of foreign

policy is not the province of any

one party.

I was sitting here—the Senator from

Texas was talking about President

Reagan—and I was recalling that I was

in Congress when Americans in Beirut

were killed by a truck bomb. There

have been a lot of circumstances where

we had to learn exactly how and when

we involve ourselves. It is a lesson that

is very hard to learn.

The folks who feel very strongly

about American and NATO involvement

in Kosovo will make the case

that if the situation is not contained

there, it will spread very quickly and

we will have a very substantial, broader

problem on our hands in Europe. My

colleague from Delaware is waiting to

speak. He knows a lot more about

these issues and has been involved with

them much longer than the combined

service of myself and the Senator from

Texas.

But I think all of us are probably

nervous about these issues. We do not

know exactly what the right approach

might be. I only rose today to say that

I am concerned about the timing of

this debate. Just this afternoon sensitive

negotiations are occurring in

Belgrade with Mr. Milosevic. I hope Mr.

Milosevic will hear at least one voice

coming from this Congress, perhaps

many voices, saying that the slaughter

in that region of the world must stop—

one way or the other.

With that point, let me yield the

floor. I know my colleague, Senator

BIDEN, is waiting to speak.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.