Mr. President, I am

going to take 11⁄2 minutes to pose a

question. Again, we all draw on

our experiences in life. I served overseas

in Korea with an air unit, as a

combat officer, I might say. Right now,

I am trying to put myself—and I hope

my colleagues put themselves—into a

cockpit and we are strapped in, as

these young Americans are right now,

strapped in waiting for an order, which

could come in the next hour.

Having met with the President the

other day with my two colleagues here

on the floor, I am convinced that he is

going to join other NATO leaders and

give that order at an appropriate time

if the current mission of diplomacy by

another courageous man, Mr.

Holbrooke, is not successful.

I hope we can start to focus pretty

quickly, not so much on all the historical

parts of this important issue, like

sovereignty and constitutionality, but

on what we are going to do to support

our military. It seems to me that this

body at this time has to look itself in

the eye and say these men and women

are about to fly, about to take risks

with our allies, and I think it is essential

that the Congress of the United

States be on record as supporting

them. I will address that in such opportunity

as I may have following my distinguished

colleague’s speech.

If the Senator would

allow me to make one clarification to

your statement. I want to make it

clear I said I served with others who

were in combat. I was a ground officer

who helped strap them in, who checked

their radios and their communications.

Occasionally, I did get to ride along

with them in a back seat, but I never

put myself in the combat category

with those brave men who, day after

day, were strapped in to fly combat.

But I lived with them, slept there in

the same tents, ate in the same mess,

used to go up and observe what they

had to do.

But let me tell you, I think we have

to put ourselves in that cockpit right

now as if we were qualified to be in

combat and show that the Congress of

the United States wants to support

them. I think that is absolutely essential.

I look forward to listening

very tentatively to hopefully

most of it. I think it is important we

do lay out the case. I will allude to, I

think, much the same case that you do.

But I do believe it is essential to this

Senate to pass on the Smith amendment,

if that is what is before us at

this time; and then it seems to me that

someone could possibly come on with a

resolution like, as I understand, the

Senator from Delaware, which clearly

focuses on the issue: Do we or do we

not support the use of force by the U.S.

military together with our allies in

this frightful situation in Kosovo?

Mr. President, I commend

the majority leader and Senators

HUTCHISON and SMITH for bringing this

matter to the Senate floor today. With

fighting escalating in Kosovo, with the

Serbs refusing to sign a peace agreement,

and with U.S. military air units,

together with those of our allies,

poised to strike, it is important, if

there is time, for the Senate to address

this situation.

Under most contingencies, the U.S.

military should not be sent into harm’s

way without the support of the American

people and the Congress. Our nation

has learned, from recent contingencies

that, without such support,

when casualties occur, a clamor could

begin to ‘‘bring our troops home.’’ We

witnessed that in Somalia; we could

see that again in Kosovo. Our military

deserves our support. I say to my fellow

Senators, if you were sitting in a

cockpit, ordered to carry out strikes

against the Serbian military, you

would like to know that the Congress,

the elected representatives of the people,

is with you, supporting your mission

and concerned for the risks you

are taking.

I first visited Kosovo in August of

1990 on a delegation headed by Senator

Robert Dole. I commend this brave veteran

for his mission to the Balkan region

in the past few weeks in the cause

of peace. His efforts contributed to the

securing of signatures by the Kosovar

Albanian delegation on a peace agreement.

During my visit to Kosovo in 1990, I

saw first-hand the oppression of the

Kosovar Albanians by the Serb authorities.

I returned to the region most

recently in September of 1998, traveling

through Kosovo with Ambassador

Christopher Hill and elements of a courageous

international observer group

called KDOM.

Since last March we have all closely

followed developments—indeed the humanitarian

tragedy—in this troubled

region. And since last September, when

NATO first threatened the use of force

against Milosevic, NATO credibility

has been on the line. We are now at a

defining moment in this crisis.

Since September, I have been outspoken

in my support for the use of

U.S. ground troops as part of a NATO led

force to implement a peace agreement

that is in place relative to

Kosovo. In my view, such a military

force is necessary—once a peace agreement

is reached—if the parties to the

agreement are to have the confidence

necessary to be bound by the provisions

of such a peace agreement. And I

believe U.S. participation in such a

force is necessary if we are to maintain

our status as the leader of the NATO

Alliance.

My greatest concern has been and

continues to be that a deterioration of

the situation in Kosovo could undermine

the modest gains we have

achieved in Bosnia—at a cost of over $8

billion to date to the American taxpayer;

and could lead to problems in

neighboring Macedonia, Montenegro,

Albania, and perhaps Greece and Turkey.

In addition, I share with all Americans

concern for the humanitarian

tragedy we have witnessed—are now

witnessing—in that troubled land.

But what happens if a peace agreement

remains elusive, which is now the

situation with which we are faced. It is

one thing to deploy troops into a permissive

environment for the purpose of

overseeing the implementation of a

peace agreement. It is quite another to

use military power—air—to compel a

sovereign nation to sign an agreement

to end what is essentially an internal

civil war.

There are many questions that must

be addressed. The most important

question is, what happens if bombing

does not succeed? There are very few

operations, historic examples, where

air power alone has succeeded in meeting

our military objectives. Some have

made the argument here today that air

strikes were the key to bringing the

Bosnian Serbs to the peace table in

Dayton. I had the opportunity to visit

with two people last week who were intimately

involved in the Bosnia crisis—

former British Defence Secretary Michael

Portillo and former U.N. High

Representative in Bosnia, Carl Bildt.

Both of these men told me that air

strikes were an important part, but not

the decisive factor in ending the fighting

in Bosnia. History records that the

Croatian offensive against the Serbs,

and the fact that the parties were all

exhausted from fighting were of equal

significance to the important air campaign

by the United States and our allies.

Today, that is not the case in

Kosovo—the parties there are, regrettably,

ready to fight.

My point is,—there is risk in relying

on air strikes, alone, to stop the fighting

in this crisis. We must know what

our next steps will be and how far we

are ready to go with other initiatives

to stop the fighting in Kosovo. If this

first military action is taken—which in

my view this contingency is tantamount

to an act of war—what comes

next and how far we are willing to go?

We must have in mind not simply our

first step, but our second, third or

fourth steps before we commit U.S.

troops.

While one of my main concerns in

this is the credibility of NATO now

that we have threatened military action

for many months, we must ask

ourselves what happens to NATO credibility

if the air strikes fail to accomplish

their objectives? That would be a

devastating blow to the Alliance if we

take the drastic step of attacking a

sovereign nation, and are not successful

in the ultimate objective.

What of the credibility of the United

States and our leadership on the continent

of Europe, in military as well as

economic or diplomatic partnerships?

What of the credibility of the U.S.

military as a partner in other actions?

There are important issues that can be

debated in the context of the pending

amendment.

The Smith amendment provides that

the Congress must be on record as supporting

this operation before we commit

the U.S. military to the crisis in

Kosovo. I agree. We owe it to the men

and women of the Armed Forces to act

on this issue. For that reason, I will

support the Smith amendment and

vote for cloture on this amendment.