I rise today to condemn

the murderous attacks carried out by

Serbian paramilitary units against civilians

in the province of Kosovo.

Mr. President, the immediate cause

of the violence was an attack several

days ago by units of the so-called

Kosovo Liberation Army, which killed

four Serbian police. The fundamental

cause, however, is the Serbian government

s brutal repression of the ethnic

Albanians, who make up more than

ninety percent of Kosovo s population.

In 1989, Slobodan Milosevic, as part

of his demogogic policy of whipping up

Serb ultra-nationalism, abolished the

autonomous status of Kosovo, granted

by the Yugoslav Constitution of 1974.

Flooding the province with Yugoslav

military units, special police forces,

and nationalist militias, Milosevic set

up a police state that has prevented

the ethnic Albanians from exercising

their basic political and cultural

rights.

To their credit, Kosovo s Albanian

leadership, led by Ibrahim Rugova,

opted for a non-violent approach in

their struggle for independence. They

established alternative institutions, including

a shadow parliament with various

political parties, independent

schools, and trade unions.

For eight years Mr. Rugova was able

to keep the lid on a potentially explosive

situation. Inevitably, however, the

weight of Serbian repression had its effect,

particularly on younger Kosovars,

as the ethnic Albanians of Kosovo are

called.

A so-called Kosovo Liberation Army

was formed, and last year began an

armed campaign against Serbian officials

and ethnic Serb civilians. While

this development is understandable,

Mr. President, it is regrettable. Aside

from causing casualties and deaths, the

armed resistance has provided

Milosevic the pretext for his brutal

crack-down.

The violence in Kosovo could provide

the spark to ignite the Balkan tinderbox

into full-scale regional war, which,

in the worst case, could bring in neighboring

Albania, Macedonia—and perhaps

even Bulgaria, Greece, and Turkey.

Immediate action is necessary. Already

the Administration is consulting

with our NATO allies about an appropriate

response. One immediate step

should be to extend the mandate of the

NATO-led UNPREDEP, the U.N. preventive

deployment force in neighboring

Macedonia which includes several

hundred American troops, beyond its

August 1998 termination date.

The Clinton Administration has already

revoked several concessions

granted to Milosevic as a reward for

support of the new Prime Minister of

the Republika Srpska in Bosnia.

The Bush Administration s Christmas

1992 warning of military action—

which meant air strikes against targets

across Serbia—unless violence

against the Kosovar Albanians stopped,

should be restated.

We should mobilize international

pressure on Milosevic to restore the

pre-1989 autonomy to Kosovo and to

the ethnically heterogeneous

Vojvodina (voi-voh-DEEN-uh) province

in northern Serbia.

To coordinate our policy, President

Clinton should name a high-profile

Special Representative for dealing with

the Kosovo Problem. Our current Special

Representative for the former

Yugoslavia, Robert Gelbard, is simply

stretched too thin to devote adequate

time to this explosive situation.

Mr. President, it is difficult to exaggerate

the stakes in the current

Kosovo violence. A continuation of the

Serbian repression and Kosovar Albanian

counter-violence could easily spin

out of control and endanger the entire

Balkan peninsula.

It could undue the recent progress we

have made in Bosnia and endanger

NATO solidarity.

We must act at once to prevent these

developments.