Mr. President, I will

take just a couple of minutes. I want to

comment on the administration’s discussions

with us regarding Kosovo and

just make one statement that I feel

compelled to make on the Senate floor,

which I have made to the administration

and to a number of Senators.

First of all, from this Senator’s

standpoint, it will be extremely difficult

to support any kind of military

action in Kosovo unless the President

of the United States requests of us significant

increases to the defense budget

to address the shortfalls in military

readiness, personnel, and modernization

recently acknowledged by the

Joint Chiefs of Staff.

From my standpoint, we ought not be

supporting additional military action

and putting our men and our equipment

in harm’s way unless and until

we have a game plan to put adequate

resources into our Defense Department

for the readiness shortfalls that already

exist.

The crisis in military preparedness

that has only belatedly been acknowledged

by the President and his administration

is very grave.

To support ongoing operations

around the world, our men and women

in uniform are deployed far away from

their homes and their families for unprecedented

lengths of time. Morale

among many of our troops is suffering,

and recruiting and retention statistics

are dangerously low. Modernization of

our force is seriously underfunded

across the services. Training in many

of the combatant commands must halt

well before the end of the fiscal year

due to funding and supply shortfalls.

Nearly 12,000 military families are once

again on food stamps. And failing to

provide additional funding for potential

costly military operations in

Kosovo while United States forces are

about to complete 3 years in Bosnia at

a cost of nearly $10 billion will, in my

opinion, severely and perhaps irreparably

exacerbate the critical readiness

crisis that exists.

In summary, if the President expects

this Senator to support Kosovo action—

and I am not sure the administration

seeks a resolution—I have just

stated succinctly what I believe is an

absolute necessity on the part of the

President and his administration; that

is, tell us how you are going to make

our military ready again before you

send them into harm’s way again, when

we already know that we are short of

much of the equipment and parts and

our military is in many respects lacking

and deficient in readiness.

I think it is a simple proposition. I

think they have time to do it. I think

it is serious. I think when many Senators

find out about the readiness

issues, they are going to be saying the

same thing: Let’s see how we are going

to fix that before we engage in another

battle.

I yield the floor. I thank the Senator.