Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Senator Biden. Thank you

for the opportunity to speak here today.

On his trip to the Balkans 6 weeks ago, Deputy Secretary of

State Strobe Talbott offered a stark description of what is at stake

for the West in the Kosovo crisis. ‘‘The dangerous situation in

Kosovo,’’ he said, ‘‘constitutes a dire threat to regional stability,

and therefore it poses a threat to the vital interest of the United States.’’

Mr. Talbott went further: ‘‘Kosovo could yet turn out to be the

most explosive of all the powder kegs in this part of Europe. If

Kosovo truly blows, it could be even worse than Bosnia, with the

risk of war spreading in all directions, including south and east.

‘‘The dire emergency there is directly related to the peace of Europe

as a whole, and the implications are potentially disastrous.’’

The challenge to the international community, the Deputy Secretary

said, is, ‘‘to prevent the brutal policies of Belgrade from triggering

a forth Balkan war in this century.’’

A strikingly similar assessment of U.S. national interests in

Kosovo was rendered by both the Bush administration and by the

first Clinton administration. More importantly, this strategic calculation

was then backed by the credible threat of force.

I would like to quote for the committee a portion of the ‘‘Christmas

warning’’ letter that President Bush sent to Slobodan

Milosevic and to the Belgrade military leadership in December

1992. This letter was authoritatively leaked to the press at the time:

‘‘In the event of the conflict in Kosovo caused by Serbian action,

the United States will be prepared to employ military force against

the Serbians in Kosovo and in Serbia proper.’’

Senior administration officials stated that this force would consist

of air power, including strikes at Serbian air bases, supply

lines and other military installations. The Christmas warning established

a unilateral red line that Belgrade did not cross until this

year, in fact, after American deterrence had been unaccountably let

go by the second Clinton administration.

What is the administration relying on instead of credible force to

back its diplomacy now that the Kosovo powder keg has begun to

blow? Rather than unilateral Christmas warnings, the U.S. has

been part of setting new lows and lowest common denominator diplomacy

through the six-nation Contact Group.

The vital interests of the United States are being addressed with

most of the hallmarks of failure that became familiar to all of us

during the 1992 to 1995 war in Bosnia: empty threats, public wrangling

with allies, endless international conferences, ritual handwringing,

limited sanctions. And many of the same failed measures

of the past have been pulled off the diplomatic shelf once more: A

new U.N. arms embargo, a renewed assets freeze with plenty of advance

notice, unconditional support for Yugoslavia’s territorial integrity,

robust finger-wagging at the parties to negotiate their own

solution, and new monitoring missions to supply international spectators

for the latest theater of conflict.

While the U.S. crafted and brokered a compromise ‘‘dialog and

stabilization’’ package for the April 29 Contact Group meeting, Belgrade

was trampling on the former American red lines with impunity,

including through major new force deployments and offensives

led by the Yugoslav National Army in the interior of Kosovo.

In response, the U.S. package dropped several demands that had

been made on Belgrade at prior Contact Group meetings, including

allowing humanitarian agencies access and cooperating with International

War Crimes Tribunal investigations on war crimes committed in Kosovo.

The April 29 package agreed in Rome watered down other key

Contact Group demands on withdrawal of Serbian security forces

and cessation of actions against the civilian population. It also substantially

reduced the cost for Belgrade to escape future and current

sanctions, including the diplomatic and financial outer wall.

The Contact Group has even adopted a more respectful tone,

‘‘recommending’’ rather than ‘‘requiring’’ these reduced measures, a

gesture that was appreciatively noted by Belgrade.

For their part, the Yugoslav Army, Serbian security forces, and

Belgrade’s extreme nationalist paramilitary units have been less

respectful on the ground, particularly as concerns civilian lives.

The familiar elements of the Bosnia and Croatia ethnic cleansing

campaigns are out in force again: heavy weapons and helicopter

gunships firing indiscriminately on villages; systematic slaughter of

the elderly, women, and children; execution-style murders of unarmed

men; extended seiges; sniper attacks against civilians; forcible

expulsion of ethnic groups; a violent state propaganda campaign

against the latest enemy.

In the attacks in March and April that could be verified by international

media and monitors, the great majority of the 100-plus

victims were ethnic Albanian civilians. In the intense attacks and

fighting that have been conducted in recent weeks in areas mainly

sealed to international coverage, there are strong indications that

the proportions have been similar.

Fighting has escalated sharply between Serbian forces and the

local ethnic Albanian insurgency, the Kosovo Liberation Army.

Where there were sporadic killings and attacks on Serbian police

3 months ago by the KLA, which observers then believed to num-

ber under 100 lightly armed men, since Belgrade’s crackdown 10

weeks ago the KLA has grown swiftly. It is now estimated at many

times that figure, and it is also thought to be getting heavier arms.

This on a territory about the size of Connecticut, with 2 million

residents, of whom more than 90 percent are ethnic Albanian, primarily Muslim.

The indiscriminate attacks on rural Albanian clans, in a manner

guaranteed to inflame the population and broaden support for the

insurgency, has drawn plenty of new volunteers for the KLA. Some

commentators have ironically called Milosevic the KLA’s top recruiting officer.

Mr. Chairman, for the past decade the international community,

and foremost the United States, has relied on the Kosovo Albanians

to maintain their patient dedication to nonviolence to gain

relief from the massive and violent repression imposed by Belgrade,

and to see their human rights and political self-administration restored.

The Pristina leadership was widely praised in the West, and told

always to wait and their grievances would be addressed. Wait until

after the break-up of Yugoslavia. Wait until after the war in Croatia

and its settlement. Wait until after the war in Bosnia. Wait

until after the international intervention. Wait until after Dayton.

Wait until after Dayton turns the corner. Wait until after the disastrous

results of earlier Balkan policy failures are sorted out. Just wait, and we’ll get to you.

The refusal of the U.S. to ensure that Kosovo was addressed at

Dayton was a severe blow to the moderate Albanian leaders. Their

credibility was further undermined when it became clear that war

criminals and their sponsors would be rewarded with the

Republika Srpska, a self-administered semi-State possessing key

elements of sovereignty, including a standing army.

For their heinous ethnic cleansing and seizure of territory by

force, the Bosnian Serbs were enjoying the virtual State that Pristina longed for.

For their disciplined nonviolence, the Kosovo Albanian leadership

could only show photo ops and vague testimonials from a succession

of U.S. and European leaders.

The Kosovo Liberation Army stepped into this vacuum, and on

the ground the moderates on both the Albanian and Serb sides are

being eclipsed by the hard-liners. Among the complicating factors

now is that there is no Sinn Fein-type political wing tied to the

military KLA, which is itself, apparently, an amalgam of guerrilla groups.

As usual in the former Yugoslavia, the international community

has done precious little for the moderates when it counts.

Although there were signs of seriousness on this emerging crisis

in parts of the executive branch starting last year, the administration

took the calculated risk that it could make Kosovo wait some

more. The U.S. has decisively lost that gamble, and is now grasping

at the straws of Contact Group, OSCE, European Union,

United Nations, and even Russian diplomacy. Anything, that is, except NATO.

U.S. Policy on Kosovo today is approximately where it was on

Bosnia in 1992, a policy memorably summarized by one senior

Bush administration official at that time as ‘‘let it burn.’’

There are new illusions about containing the conflict in Kosovo,

perhaps at the Albanian or Macedonian border, as if fire walls can

be built in the midst of such a blaze while its source is ignored.

The iron laws that were allegedly learned by the international

community in Bosnia apply especially in Kosovo. The first, post cold

war U.S. and NATO interests ultimately cannot sustain a

hemorrhaging of security and blood in the Balkans. Second, the

more the fire of local conflict is treated as an internal affair, the

faster and deeper it will become regionalized. And third, the weaker

the Western intervention, the more it will cost, the longer it will

last, the more dangerous it will be.

There is a range of allied military force options that could back

serious U.S.-led diplomacy to reach the necessary near-term outcome

on Kosovo, measures not, however, sufficient for a permanent

settlement. The aim would be withdrawal of Serbian security forces

and establishment of self-administration, which itself would have

to be internationally guaranteed.

The threat and possible use of force required to achieve these

purposes must simply be summoned by the commander-in-chief,

unless we are all to continue taking our chances with ‘‘let it burn’’

in the immediate vicinity of the most explosive of powder kegs in this part of Europe.

Until the White House resolves itself to such action and leadership,

the present drift and half-measures will lead to the inevitable

result: Another chance for the President to apologize for sitting out

another genocide on his watch, with the fourth Balkan War of this

century raging and a fatally wounded NATO at the center of his international legacy.

Thank you.

I think that the fuse on this one is very short, that

without an enhanced Christmas warning which backs a U.S.-led

mediation for an interim settlement, we will not see much. We

have a window now which is rapidly closing and may have already

closed, and the cardinal error of this administration on Kosovo was

to let go, to allow the Christmas warning to erode.

It was really a reckless decision, one that needs, I think, much

more examination, and there has certainly been an extremely active

debate about it in the administration. Some of the positions

that are reflected here today I think are well-reflected within the

administration. They are obviously not prevailing.

If the U.S. is not prepared to match with that level of force the

calculus of its national interest that was rendered by Brent Scowcroft,

by senior leadership of the Bush administration and the first

Clinton administration which certainly some very clear exponents

of Clinton foreign policy have endorsed, then we are really in the

soup and we will see, surely, a much larger U.S. ground intervention

later on to sort out the fighting outside of Kosovo.

The problem with some of the measures that are being considered,

even on the margins, are in fact—I fear they would send another

wrong signal of isolating Kosovo and respecting this issue as

an internal matter.

The Helsinki Accord should not be rewritten ad hoc by the U.S.,

of all countries. The Helsinki Accord is quite clear, as are our other

international covenants, that the territorial integrity of a country,

the respect for territorial integrity of a country in Europe goes

hand-in-hand with its adherence to European standards, and that

would certainly mean no use of brutal force, certainly not ethnic

cleansing against its minorities.

I think the refusal of the administration to take this

to NATO has quite a bit to do with that fact, and in fact I think

some of our European allies are putting a higher priority on keeping

Russia as part of a lowest common denominator diplomatic effort

than they are to really facing up to the fundamentals here.

Russia has not been friendly to peaceful outcomes in the Balkans,

and the Southern Balkans. I think it would be better for the

administration to question why Russia insists on collecting war

criminals and pariahs as its clients at this late date, and why they

cannot find some other Serbs to ally themselves with.

There is as difference between a pro-Serb policy and a pro-Serbs

policy. There are a lot of Serbs, a lot of moderate Serbs. There is

not just one Serb, or one handful of Serbs, and I think a good deal

could be done to remind Moscow of that.

I think it would be more credible still if the U.S. had a record

of supporting democratic forces in the former Yugoslavia, which it

decidedly does not. We tend to take it as it lays, and then wonder

why there is no Lech Walesa or Vaclav Havel.

Senator, may I just say, I think the Christmas warning

may be the only thing the Bush administration did right in the Balkans.

If I may, Senator, I think that this may be one of the

last moments that the membership in NATO has a convergent interest

on Kosovo, and that if this goes much further, that is when

the interests begin to diverge, and that is one of the things that

makes this so gravely dangerous.

I think the potential for the Kosovo conflict to split NATO in a

way that Bosnia even did not manage and, in fact, to drive a major

wedge in, transatlantically and within Europe, both within and

outside of NATO, is profound, and that is one of the reasons that

I believe we have to reverse-engineer this issue from the point of

saying, Strobe Talbott is right. I praise Strobe Talbott for his analysis.

There are others in the administration who are right, who understand

this every bit as well as anybody in this room, I would say,

doubtless better for what they know additionally.

If we believe that it is an unacceptable outcome to have a fourth

Balkan war that draws in first Macedonia, Albania—I happen in

fact not to think that the Cordon Sanitaire makes any sense, to be

honest. I think it is a marginal measure, and it is distracting, and

it is impractical and all the rest, but I would much rather invest

in a postnegotiation guarantee inside Kosovo.

But if we believe that this is an unacceptable outcome, which I

think we are all saying and I think we do agree, we certainly agree

with you, then we must do the necessary measures to ensure that

mediation takes place and we stop dancing around with closing

bank accounts in Cyprus and we get to the heart of the matter.

The U.S.—I want to say it again. The U.S. under two administrations,

and I think both administrations were serious about this and

were considered about this. Certainly Belgrade took it seriously,

and I think the Kosovo Albanians took it seriously, and the neighbors

took it seriously.

These two administrations made a calculation that this was such

a profound interest of the U.S., a vital national security interest,

as Secretary Talbott says, that we were prepared to act unilaterally.

No United Nations, no OSCE, no Europeans, no NATO. We

were prepared to act unilaterally if necessary.

That is the beginning of wisdom, to get a baseline on Kosovo, to

get a grip on the Kosovo crisis rapidly, and it has to start, as ever,

in the Oval Office, and I think if that does not happen, and if it

does not happen fairly quickly, there will be a disastrous legacy for

this administration and for NATO that will really make Bosnia

look like the warm-up, Bosnia pre-1995.