

Statement on Kosovo debate

Tuesday, 27 April 1999 19:00

Today I voted for the bipartisan Senate-approved resolution authorizing President Clinton to continue military air operations and missile strikes against Yugoslavia. I supported this resolution because it shows strong support for the troops while endorsing the NATO action as the best available way to convince President Milosevic that his campaign of ethnic cleansing is unacceptable.

We in Congress must take care to be supportive and not limit our future military options in Kosovo, especially given that the situation may change faster than Congress can react. For that reason, I opposed the Goodling-Fowler resolution as it would have required Congressional authorization before using ground troops. Even though the Goodling-Fowler resolution will never find its way into law, the act of approval by the House sends all the wrong signals about our commitment to NATO's actions. We cannot afford to tie NATO's hands or broadcast our military intentions -- especially at this important juncture in the conflict.

I also opposed both proposals by Rep. Campbell, one declaring war on Yugoslavia and the other demanding the removal of our armed forces from their positions near Yugoslavia. I believe both resolutions were extreme and not helpful in advancing NATO's efforts to restore peace to the region, in returning the Kosovars to their homeland, or in reducing or eliminating Milosevic's ability to threaten his neighbors or terrorize minorities inside Yugoslavia.

However, I feel clarifying Congress's role in foreign conflicts under the War Powers Act is one worth considering at an appropriate time. We in Congress have continued to neglect what Congress' exact role should be in these situations. It is unfortunate that we seem to only visit this issue in the middle of conflicts, when such debate is confusing at best, and often inappropriate. I am hopeful we can schedule a full debate on this issue at a time certain before the end of this Congress.