



# **PRESS RELEASE**

## **House Armed Services Committee**

### **Floyd D. Spence, Chairman**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

April 15, 1999

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#### **STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN FLOYD D. SPENCE**

#### **FULL COMMITTEE HEARING ON KOSOVO WITH**

#### **SECRETARY COHEN AND GENERAL SHELTON**

I want to welcome Secretary Cohen and General Shelton and thank them for being here so we can discuss on-going operations in the Balkans. We had hoped that Secretary Albright would also testify this afternoon but, unfortunately, she declined the committee's invitation.

Mr. Secretary, as you know, I returned earlier this week from a trip to Europe that included discussions with General Clark, Admiral Ellis, Ambassador Hill and U.S. and British military forces currently deployed in Macedonia. It was a worthwhile trip that made some lasting impressions on me.

The flood of refugees into the border states surrounding Kosovo is a real humanitarian crisis. The response of NATO military forces to the refugee problem – especially the building and managing of the refugee transit camps – has surely saved thousands of innocent lives.

But Mr. Secretary, regardless of how it is that the U.S. finds itself waging war against a sovereign nation, the reality is that NATO is at war in the Balkans, and the stakes are high. While I believe the Administration and NATO leaders made a number of miscalculations with regards to Milosevic's resolve and the effectiveness of air power, I also agree with those who argue that NATO cannot afford to lose this war. Unfortunately, avoiding a loss does not constitute a viable political and military strategy.

The air war is predominantly an American affair. So as the air war escalates, the absence of any broad based understanding of how victory is defined, is deeply troubling. Even if the weather cooperates, and even if the Administration adopts a more aggressive, and admittedly higher-risk, approach to the bombing, and even if NATO foreign ministers stop trying to do General Clark's targeting for him, how confident is anyone that the military force being applied in the Balkans is consistent with the ever changing political and diplomatic objectives?

And if the air campaign does not succeed, what then? As I have stated on numerous occasions, I oppose the introduction of U.S. ground troops into the Balkans – in either a permissive or non-permissive

environment. As a nation, we should never allow ourselves to fall into the trap too often set by our allies that NATO military operations cannot succeed and the alliance will surely crumble unless U.S. troops are leading the way.

Right now, we are leading the air war and, at the same time, are providing the vast majority of the lift, communications, logistics and intelligence support. In the event that NATO ground troops are introduced, we would presumably continue to do all of these things. Isn't this enough? Under such circumstances, could anyone honestly accuse us of not shouldering more than our fair share of the alliance's effort? Shouldn't the Europeans be able to provide the ground troops for what would likely become a long-term military presence in southern Europe?

U.S. military strategy retains as its centerpiece the ability of our military forces to fight two nearly simultaneous major theater wars – focused primarily on the Persian Gulf and the Korean peninsula. In a press briefing yesterday, Secretary Bacon stated that he would not know how to define a “major regional contingency.” But this is exactly where we are headed in the Balkans, yet the nation's military leaders never planned on Europe being a “major regional contingency,” and neither did OMB when it came time to build the Administration's defense budgets.

As this third major regional contingency unfolds before our eyes in the Balkans, we are exposing ourselves in Asia and in the Gulf. We have moved a carrier out of the Pacific, have transferred critical aircraft to the Balkans from their missions over Iraq, are running out of certain preferred munitions and are calling up the Reserves to address personnel shortfalls.

Even if one considers the Balkans conflict to be a threat to U.S. national interests, it certainly does not rise to the level of threat posed by a North Korean attack on the South, or a Chinese attack on Taiwan or war breaking out in the Persian Gulf. In my opinion, we are already inadequately prepared to decisively engage in Asia or the Gulf, but with a large and growing military commitment in the Balkans, what happens if war breaks out in those regions of the world where there is no question as to our national interest?

In General Shelton's own words, our nation's military forces have become a “low density, high demand asset.” We simply cannot continue to conduct large scale, open ended missions in the Balkans without jeopardizing our ability to protect and promote our national interests elsewhere around the world.

Mr. Secretary, I was heartened to learn that the President was planning to submit a request for supplemental appropriations to help pay for the costs of Kosovo-related operations this fiscal year. However, if the rumors are true that the request is likely to be only \$3 - \$4 billion dollars, I do not believe it will be enough. Simply paying to recoup the direct costs of operating the force and for expended ammunition is necessary, but far from sufficient. It does nothing to address our vulnerabilities and shortfalls in other critically important and dangerous regions of the world, and it certainly does nothing to address the numerous problems associated with this state of seemingly never ending high operational and personnel tempo – the so-called “wear and tear” on an already undersized, underfunded and over extended military. \$3 - \$4 billion dollars will not cover the true costs of “doing more with less” as operations in the Balkans grow. I hope the President will take this into account as the proposal for a supplemental appropriations bill is put together.

Mr. Secretary, we all recognize that Congress cannot wage war, but we also all realize that a war cannot be conducted for long without the understanding and support of the Congress and the American people. I hope today's hearing will help further our understanding of escalating U.S. and NATO operations in the Balkans.

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