

KOSOVO

Mr. WARNER. Mr. President, there is increasing concern within the United States, and quite properly, for the fate of the people of Kosovo. I wish to address my concerns, in what I deliver to the Senate this afternoon, in what are entirely my remarks. I take full responsibility for the views and opinions that I express. I have, however, availed myself of every opportunity to learn firsthand about the critical nature of this problem, including a visit several weeks ago to this region which included a trip to Bosnia, thence to Belgrade, thence to Macedonia, and then into Kosovo. I commend the Ambassadors from the United States to Macedonia and—he has the rank of DCM—to Serbia for their very diligent and hard work in representing the interests of our Government and, indeed, those of our principal allies. That is Ambassador Hill and Ambassador Miles. I spent a considerable time with both.

Likewise, I was given the opportunity in Kosovo to visit with a group known as KDOM, which is an unusual group constituted following negotiations between our Ambassadors and, as I understand, their counterparts in Belgrade whereby this group of U.S. military and diplomatic, Russian military and diplomatic, Canadian military and diplomatic and, indeed, some of the EU nations, are given the opportunity to travel without weapons into certain regions of Kosovo for the purpose of observing—and I repeat—observing the tragic unfolding of atrocities throughout that country. I joined them in their armored cars for the purpose of this visit and then had the opportunity to be debriefed extensively by these individuals.

They are doing a remarkable job taking personal risks and providing the free world with an inside examination of this serious and critical problem. I wish to pay them tribute. I also was able, when I returned, to visit with the NATO commander, General Clark, to get them some additional equipment to carry out their missions.

I have also, like most Senators, availed myself, since 1992, of the opportunities to visit in Bosnia and to study the complex issues that brought about that tragic period of hostilities, which hostilities now have been brought to some measure of conclusion, largely because of the allied forces that are in there providing the security so that the Dayton accords can be implemented.

In this entire region, referred to as the Balkans, you cannot touch one spot without affecting, in my judgment, the others.

Now NATO, the United Nations, the United States—all of us—are faced with the following situation: Repeatedly in Kosovo atrocities are taking place against innocent human beings, largely innocent. We have no way of judging their culpability in the separatist movement initiated sometime ago by the forces known as the KLA,

but while I was there, I saw the houses being burned, I saw armed people, I saw the hopeless refugees numbering in the hundreds of thousands who had been driven into the hills and wanted to do the right thing, to alleviate the human suffering. That is the main threshold.

Also, our Nation and our allies have put a very considerable investment, first, of the risks taken by our military and diplomatic people and the NGOs—those of nongovernmental organizations who have brought relief to this region—we have put an enormous investment of time and effort to bring about a cessation of those hostilities. In my judgment, unless this situation in Kosovo is likewise secured, it could undermine such advances, although modest, in my judgment, that we have made collectively as nations in this region. First is humanitarian concern for the people; second is to prevent instability as a consequence of this conflict, erasing some of the gains that we have had there.

Lastly, our Nation is proud of the fact that we are the leader, in my judgment, in NATO. Only NATO is the only military force that can and, indeed, should be employed if it is necessary to bring about the cessation of hostilities in Kosovo.

The administration has made efforts, I think many bona fide efforts, through the diplomatic chain—speaking directly with Milosevic in Belgrade. We have been joined by other nations, referred to as the “contact group.” I think every effort has been made diplomatically in the past that could have been made, and now that effort is strengthened by a degree day by day of the assertion by the United Nations with regard to their growing concern about the humanitarian problems taking place in Kosovo.

But in no way should the military option, which has to back up diplomacy—diplomacy can be no more effective than the credibility of the willingness of certain nations to back up that diplomatic effort—in no way should the United Nations, in my judgment, have any veto over the decision of the collection of nations—the United States being one, Great Britain, France, Germany and others—to take such action as they deem necessary to bring about a cessation of the tragic situation in Kosovo.

I want to repeat that. Never should the United Nations be put in the position, nor NATO allow itself to be put in a position, where the United Nations has a veto power over the decision-making of NATO. But I think the announcements by the Security Council recently give adequate cover for those nations who wish to collectively act, if necessary, to back up their diplomacy with military action.

That military action, in my judgment, has very severe consequences. I want to make it clear, speaking for myself, that I support the use of force if diplomacy fails, and that is a tough position to take, because I have had

grave reservations through these many years about our continued participation and expenditure and deployment of troops in Bosnia, but in the final resolution of the Dayton accords, I felt that I would lend my support, and did, for the putting in of the SFOR and IFOR forces. They have, as I say, to some modest degree, achieved the milestones set out in the Dayton accords. But, in my judgment, of course, we took a step backward, regrettably, as a consequence of the recent elections. Nevertheless, always focus on the considerable investment we have put in that region and how that investment can be jeopardized unless the Kosovo situation is stopped in terms of the atrocities.

How do we do it? My concern is the discussion in the open thus far—and I have availed myself of classified sources and I will only address the open discussion—is that the use of air power will bring about a situation whereby Milosevic in Belgrade will cease the directions and cease sending the Serb Army and the police associated with the Serb Army to stop perpetrating these atrocities. I think if that air power were absolutely and unequivocally of a magnitude that could get that attention, then it would work. But, in my judgment, air alone will not satisfy the situation.

There is a very interesting fact of Kosovo that is well known: that the Kosovar Albanians number about 90 percent of the population, and 10 percent are of Serb ethnicity. Yet, for the past several years, ever since Milosevic I think wrongfully stripped Kosovo province of a certain degree of its autonomy years ago, the Serbians have pretty well controlled that region. And they have used repressive forces against the Kosovars for years.

This insurrection did not happen overnight. It has been coming on for many years. I visited Kosovo in 1991 with Senator Dole, with Senator NICKLES, and others. We went into that region. And we saw with our own eyes the tension that was developing. But the point I wish to make, the air operation, I am confident, could be of such a magnitude as to seal off and stop the flow of supplies, the professional Army and, indeed, I think many of the supplemental police forces that have come down from Serbia to perpetrate these atrocities. That can be done.

But then we leave a region which is affiliated largely 90 percent with the Kosovar Albanians pitted against the 10 percent remnants of the Serbian force. And it is my judgment that that situation would quickly destabilize and you would experience atrocities of a greater magnitude than are taking place in the recent weeks and, indeed, for many, many months in that region.

I want to point out these atrocities, the greater proportion of the atrocities, I think, are directly linked to Milosevic and the Serbian interests. But there have been instances where the Kosovar Albanians have perpetrated atrocities of a comparable

magnitude in viciousness, but of course not in a magnitude of totality of loss of life in that region. So both sides come to this problem not with clean hands at all, in my judgment.

The Kosovar Albanians have as one of their objectives a greater Albania. You have virtual anarchy now in Albania. You have large populations of the refugees that have left Albania in Montenegro. That is destabilized. You have some in Macedonia. Indeed, these refugees are throughout this region. And in the event that force has to be used as a consequence of the failure of diplomatic efforts, my concern is that the KLA will view that as the allies, the nations of NATO, coming to their aid and supporting their long-term goal of a greater Albania. That is very troublesome, Mr. President, very troublesome.

That is why I believe—and, again, it is my judgment—that any military action to bring about a cessation of the current level of atrocities in Kosovo has to be associated with what I call a ground element or a stabilizing force that would prevent a greater level of insurrection amongst the populations of predominantly 90 percent Kosovar Albanians and 10 percent Serbs.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Virginia has only a few seconds left of his 15 minutes.

Mr. WARNER. Fine. I ask unanimous consent for additional time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. WARNER. I see that my distinguished colleague from Oklahoma is here. I could finish in 6 or 7 minutes.

Mr. NICKLES. No. Go ahead and finish.

Mr. WARNER. Fine. I will resume my remarks.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. How much more time does the Senator seek?

Mr. WARNER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent for 10 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. WARNER. Mr. President, I go back to the situation and recap quickly. As I look at what is in the open, as I say, reported in the New York Times, the Washington Post—and recently we have had some excellent reporting about the military options being examined by NATO—they either intentionally or otherwise leave out any reference to a stabilizing force and the need for that force in Kosovo. And that is the basic reason why I take the floor of the Senate today, to express my own professional judgment that any air operation to alleviate the suffering here has to have, very speedily, a follow-up ground presence in Kosovo to prevent what I predict would be an increased clash among these peoples with the absence of a stabilizing force.

I think it is very important that the President, if he is contemplating the use of force, together with the heads of state of other nations, come to the Congress, come to the American people and point out—if I am wrong, point it

out. But I have consulted a great many people about this situation. As I say, I saw it myself weeks ago. The hatred between the Kosovar Albanians and the remnants of the Serbs that are still there is incredible. It is beyond the ability of anybody really to explain it. They will fall upon themselves as they come down out of these hills.

There are maybe as much as a quarter of a million people—refugees—in these hills. When they return to their villages and homes, which I saw, which are burned and destroyed, and see the looting and the destruction, both of human beings and property, they will be incensed, and I think they will turn to fighting themselves. And that is a situation we cannot allow to happen as a consequence of an air operation there and in other areas of that region.

It would bring about greater instability, in my judgment, in Bosnia, that sort of insurrection. It could bring it about in Macedonia. It could feed into the instability here. Montenegro is an integral part of Serbia. There is a good deal of competition between the head of state and government in Montenegro and Milosevic in Serbia. And that situation would be exacerbated.

You must always remember, if airstrikes go against the Serbs, Greece historically has had long relationships with Serbia, as has Russia. Russia now has a very important part of the military that is stationed in Bosnia. What are the consequences that will flow with those two nations if we strike against Serbia?

So I basically conclude my remarks by saying that I think that any operation will have to explain why it is the judgment of those preparing this operation that the ground element is not necessary before this Senator is going to sign off and lend his support.

In my judgment, it is an essential part of any operation to prevent what I predict would be a greater increase of tragedies there. Nevertheless, with the absence of the Serbian Army and the police, other fighting would quickly fall behind.

Furthermore, if you are to help these quarter of a million refugees, you have to bring in food, medicine, supplies and shelter. How could these be brought in if there is a virtual civil war going on? Therefore, without a stabilizing force, you are not going to be able to get the NGO support and such other support that is essential to be brought to bear in that region in the coming weeks, as weather closes in on these hopeless, hapless people who are now confined in the hills.

Furthermore, if you start bombing in this region, that will create another group of refugees who will begin to flee from the sites that either have been bombed or sites that are likely to be bombed if the first raid or the second raid doesn't succeed. So the quarter million down here will grow in number by many more refugees in this situation. Then they will start, in my judgment, flowing across the borders.

I do not believe to the extent this plan has been discussed in the open—largely by the press—that this is a workable operation. At this time I could not lend my support, although I support a plan that would bring about the cessation of this tragic killing that is going on in Kosovo. The likely and precipitous undermining of what progress we have made in Bosnia and the fact that NATO would be viewed as not fulfilling its mission under the leadership of the United States are the reasons compelling us to look at this operation.

If we are going to do it, let's make certain we do it properly to achieve the goals of humanitarian relief and the lessening of the killings.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oklahoma.

Mr. NICKLES. Mr. President, first I wish to congratulate and compliment my colleague from Virginia for a very thoughtful speech, and also for his homework in this area, and the fact that he spent some time traveling to this troubled region of the world.

I had the pleasure of traveling with Senator WARNER and Senator Dole, I believe in 1991. We met with Mr. Milosevic and we traveled into Kosovo. I became convinced that Mr. Milosevic was a tyrant. I still believe he is. He needs to be stopped. We need to have affirmative action to stop him. We have had strong words from this administration. We have had very little action. I am not convinced they have a plan that will fully complement their desires, so I am concerned about that.

But I am also working with other colleagues in this body to try to see that the United States and NATO stand up to Milosevic and try to develop a plan that is workable. I appreciate the fact that my colleague from Virginia is willing to speak out and lend his experience and education in this area. Maybe together we can come up with something that will work and stop the atrocities, but also avoid some of the pitfalls that could easily have happened in Bosnia, where some of us were concerned about the cost and the expense.

Some of us felt misled by this administration when they said we would only be in Bosnia for a short period of time. We stated that wasn't the case. We knew that wasn't the case. We knew we wouldn't be limited to 1 year. Frankly, they misled Congress and they misled the American people as far as the commitment in Bosnia. I want to avoid that repetition of that as it pertains to Kosovo.

I appreciate my colleagues' comments.

Mr. WARNER. Mr. President, I thank my distinguished colleague and friend. I wish to commend the leadership of Senator LOTT and yourself, Senator HELMS, Senator THURMOND, Senator DOMENICI, Senator MCCAIN, and many of us who have quietly begun to try to

look at this situation, to give constructive advice to Senator LOTT and yourself. I think that, hopefully, that message will get to the administration.

At the moment, I am expressing my own view. I am not satisfied with what I have seen in the open about this plan. I think it has to incorporate pieces which will bring about a stabilization of the potential conflict that could take place in the aftermath of an airstrike.

The Senator rightly points out we had the Joint Chiefs before the Armed Services Committee the other day seeking additional funds for critical needs in our forces, and we have now expended by our Nation up to \$9 billion in Bosnia—much of that coming out of the military budget. It is unprogrammed, unbudgeted. We are taking funds out of R&D, operation and maintenance accounts. That has a direct adverse effect on the readiness and the lifestyle of our men and women in the Armed Forces.

We will take steps to correct that, but I think the Senator is absolutely right. I thank the Senator and the distinguished majority leader for the work they have done.

Mr. NICKLES. Mr. President, to conclude the dialog on Kosovo, the administration gave most Members of the Senate a briefing yesterday, but they have a lot of work to do. They have a lot of work to do if they are going to convince the Congress, if they are going to convince the American people. They have a lot of leveling with the American people as far as the expense, as far as the obligation, as far as what the next step is after the first phase. They haven't answered those questions.

That is not exactly what I call "consulting with Congress." Maybe we had a little dialog with the administration, but we have a lot of work to do yet.

Mr. WARNER. I thank my colleague for bringing that up. I participated, of course, in those briefings.

I am not here to advocate the U.S. ground forces in Kosovo. It seems to me if there is an air operation that the United States—because of its particular type of aircraft and munitions—would have to take a lead in that and then the role of the stabilization force should fall to other allies, in my judgment. I think you can't have one without the other.

I thank my colleague.

Mr. NICKLES. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak for an additional 10 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM ACT

Mr. NICKLES. Mr. President, earlier today, I, Senator LIEBERMAN, Senator SPECTER, Senator COATS, Senator AKAKA, as well as Congressman WOLF, and other leaders of various religious organizations, had a press conference

discussing the International Religious Freedom Act. We came out and spoke in favor of Congress passing the International Religious Freedom Act this year.

I tell my colleagues, I very much hope and expect we will do that. I think it is one of the highest priorities we have left before we adjourn this session.

The issue of religious persecution and freedom is an issue that I have been working on, as many others have, for a long time. I very much value the opportunity and the right and the privilege that I have as an American citizen to worship as I please, where I please, how I please. In fact, I believe it is one of the most precious rights that any of us have as a citizen of this country.

Unfortunately, too many people in too many countries do not have that right. It is unfortunate that in many places all around the world, religious persecution is a common practice. It happens in more countries than we can imagine. There are far too many state laws and policies that restrict religious freedom.

For many years, I have worked with my colleagues, Senator HELMS, Senator LUGAR and Senator Nunn, to help win freedom for those around the world who suffer because of religious beliefs. While we have been successful on many occasions, sadly, in some cases, we haven't been. Most of this work has been done, I might mention, quietly and behind the scenes.

In 1996, I was honored to sponsor a Senate resolution on religious persecution, which passed by unanimous consent. In that resolution, the Senate made a strong recommendation "that the President expand and invigorate the United States' international advocacy on behalf of persecuted Christians, and initiate a thorough examination of all the United States' policies that affect persecuted Christians."

Unlike the resolution that we helped get through the Senate 2 years ago, the legislation we are talking about today makes no distinction as to the faith of those who are being persecuted. This bill, I believe, will benefit all persons of all faiths who are persecuted for practicing their religion.

Congressman FRANK WOLF and Senator ARLEN SPECTER have done a great job during the past year and a half in bringing this issue to the attention of the American public. I want to thank my friend, Congressman WOLF, for his leadership in the House, and of course all those persons in the House who passed a similar bill with a record vote, 375-41. Now, we in the Senate have a historic opportunity to finish the job that was started by the House, by passing the International Religious Freedom Act.

I also want to thank my colleague, Senator SPECTER, for his leadership as original sponsor of the resolution. His work on our legislation, I think, has added considerably to the effectiveness of the bill.

I also want to thank Senators GRAMS and HAGEL who worked with us to modify the bill to ensure that what we are doing is responsible and it is done in a careful way. I think with their efforts we have crafted a bill that can be supported by all Senators, as evidenced by the fact that a broad spectrum of grassroots organizations have endorsed this bill.

We have 29 Senate cosponsors, and I expect we will have more shortly. We have 21 groups that are supporting our bill who are advocating religious freedom. Those organizations include: the Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, the National Association of Evangelicals, the International Fellowship of Jews and Christians, the Christian Coalition, the Episcopal Church, the Anti-Defamation League, Advocates International, the National Jewish Coalition, Traditional Values Coalition, American Jewish Committee, Justice Fellowship, the Catholic Conference, B'Nai B'rith International, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America, Catholic Conference of Major Superiors of Men's Institutes, Jewish Council for Public Affairs, Union of American Hebrew Congregations, Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America, National Conference of Soviet Jewry, the United Methodist Church-Women's Division, and the American Coptic Association.

The Episcopal Church stated the following about the International Religious Freedom Act in a letter to each office on Capitol Hill:

The Nickles-Lieberman bill is a moderate, flexible response to human rights abuses that strikes the right balance between imposing inflexible sanctions in overlooking serious human rights abuses.

The Catholic conference stated the following in a letter to my office:

The bill is a reasonable and thoughtful effort to ensure that religious liberty has its rightful place in U.S. policy while preserving the authority of the Executive to pursue legitimate foreign policy goals. It deserves broad, bipartisan support and should be considered before Congress adjourns.

B'nei B'rith International, The Union of American Hebrew Congregations, and The Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America signed a letter to me stating:

Passage of this bill would underscore our nation's commitment to human rights worldwide and lend hope to millions of religious believers who suffer because of their faith. Failure to act now on this legislation would send a dangerous signal to persecutors that they can act with impunity.

Unfortunately, it is a tragic reality that literally millions of religious believers around the world live with the terrifying prospect of persecution—of being tortured, arrested, imprisoned, or even killed simply for their faith. Millions more around the world are denied, by government policy, the ability to practice their religion.

I believe that this bill can be an effective tool in helping to resolve the problem of religious persecution throughout the world.