over 19,000 sorties, thousands and thousands of bombs have been dropped, and there have been very few incidents of this kind. I know that you know how many there have been because Mr. Milosevic makes sure that the media has access to them.

I grieve for the loss of the innocent Chinese and their families. I grieve for the loss of the innocent Serbian civilians and their families. I grieve for the loss of the innocent Kosovars who were put into a military vehicle that our people thought was a military vehicle, and they've often been used as shields.

But I ask you to remember the stories I told you earlier. There are thousands of people that have been killed systematically by the Serb forces. There are 100,000 people who are still missing. We must remember who the real victims are here and why this started.

It is no accident that Mr. Milosevic has not allowed the international media to see the slaughter and destruction in Kosovo. There is no picture reflecting the story that one refugee told of 15 men being tied together and set on fire while they were alive. No, there are no pictures of that. But we have enough of those stories to know that there is a systematic effort that has animated our actions, and we must not forget it.

Now, Serbia faces a choice. Mr. Milosevic and his allies have dragged their people down a path of racial and religious hatred. This has resulted, again and again, in bloodshed, in loss of life, in loss of territory, and denial of the Serbs' own freedom—and now, in an unwinnable conflict against the united international community.

But there is another path available—one where people of different backgrounds and religions work together, within and across national borders; where people stop redrawing borders and start drawing blueprints for a prosperous, multiethnic future.

This is the path the other nations of Southeastern Europe have adopted. Day after day, they work to improve lives, to build a future in which the forces that pull people together are stronger than those that tear them apart. Albania and Bulgaria, as well as our NATO ally, Greece, have overcome historical differences to recognize the independence of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Romania, Bulgaria, Macedonia and others have deepened freedoms, promoted tolerance, pursued difficult economic reforms. Slovenia has advanced democracy at home, and prosperity; stood for regional integration, increased security cooperation, with a center to defuse land mines left from the conflict in Bosnia.

These nations are reaffirming that discord is not inevitable, that there is not some Balkan disease that has been there for centuries, always waiting to break out. They are drawing on a rich past where peoples of the region did, in fact, live together in peace.

Now, we and our allies have been helping to build that future, but we have to accelerate our efforts. We will work with the European Union, the World Bank, the IMF and others to ease the immediate economic strains, to relieve debt burden, to speed reconstruction, to advance economic reforms and regional trade. We will promote political freedom and tolerance of minorities.

At our NATO Summit last month we agreed to deepen our security engagement in the region, to adopt an ambitious program to help aspiring nations improve their candidacies to join the NATO Alliance. They have risked and sacrificed the support of the military and humanitarian efforts. They deserve our support.

Last Saturday was the anniversary of one of the greatest day in American history and in the history of freedom—VE Day. Though America celebrated that day in 1945, we did not pack up and go home. We stayed—to provide economic aid, to help to bolster democracy, to keep the peace—and because our strength and resolve was important as Europe rebuilt, learned to live together; faced new challenges together.

The resources we devoted to the Marshall Plan, to NATO, to other efforts, I think we would all agree have been an enormous bargain for our long-term prosperity and security here in the United States—just as the resources we are devoting here at this institution—to reaching out to people from other nations, to their officers, to their military, in a spirit of cooperation are an enormous bargain for the future security of the people of the United States.

Now, that's what I want to say in my last point here. War is expensive; peace is cheaper. Prosperity is downright profitable. We have to invest in the rebuilding of this region. Southeastern Europe, after the Cold War, was free but poor. As long as they are poor, they will offer a less compelling counterweight to the kind of ethnic exclusivity and oppression that Mr. Milosevic preaches.

If you believe the Marshall Plan worked, and you believe war is to be avoided whenever possible, and you understand how expensive it is and how profitable prosperity is, how much we have gotten out of what we have done—then we have to work with our European allies to rebuild Southeastern Europe, and to give them an economic future that will pull them together.

The European Union is prepared to take the lead role in Southeastern Europe's development. Russia, Ukraine, other nations of Europe's East are building democracy—they want to be a part of this.

We are trying to do this in other places in the world. What a great ally Japan has been for peace and prosperity, and will be again as they work to overcome their economic difficulty. Despite our present problems, I still believe we must remain committed to building a long-term strategic partnership with China.

We must work together with people where we can, as we prepare—always—to protect and defend our security if we must. But a better world and a better Europe are clearly in America's interests.

Serbia and the rest of the Balkans should be part of it. So I want to say this one more time: Our quarrel is not with the Serbian people. The United States has been deeply enriched by Serbian Americans. Millions of Americans are now cheering for some Serbian Americans as we watch the basketball play-offs every night on television. People of Serbian heritage are an important part of our society. We can never forget that the Serbs fought bravely with the allies against fascist aggression in World War II; that they suffer much; that Serbs, too, have been uprooted from their homes and have suffered greatly in the conflicts of the past decade that Mr. Milosevic provoked.

But the cycle of violence has to end. The children of the Balkans—all of them—deserve the chance to grow up without fear. Serbs simply must free themselves of the notion that their neighbors must be their enemies. The real enemy is a poisonous hatred unleashed by a cynical leader, based on a distorted view of what constitutes real national greatness.

The United States has become greater as we have shed racism, as we have shed a sense of superiority, as we have become more committed to working together across the lines that divide us, as we have found other ways to define meaning and purpose in life. And so has every other country that has embarked on that course.

We stand ready, therefore, to embrace Serbia as a part of a new Europe—if the people of Serbia are willing to invest and embrace that kind of future; if they are ready to build a Serbia, and a Yugoslavia, that is democratic, and respects the right and dignity of all people; if they are ready to join a world where people reach across the divide to find their common humanity and their prosperity.

This is the right vision, and the right course. It is not only the morally right thing for America, it is the right thing for our security interests over the long run. It is the vision for which the veterans in this room struggled so valiantly, for which so many others have given their lives.

With your example to guide us, and with our allies beside us, it is a vision that will prevail. And it is very, very much worth standing for.

Thank you, and God bless you. (Applause.)

OPPOSE RENEWAL OF WHALING BY MAKAH TRIBE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Washington (Mr. METCALF) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. METCALF. Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak on an issue that millions of our people in our Nation seriously care about. Since the close of the worldwide whaling era at the end of the last century, it has been U.S. policy to oppose killing whales.

But today we have a real problem. The Clinton-Gore administration is quietly changing this policy by authorizing the hunting and killing of whales by the Makah Indian tribe in northwest Washington State.

The victims of course are the gray whales, the major focus of whale watching on the northwest coast of Washington State and the United States. These whales are local to the northwest coast, and they do not fear boats. They are used to the boats. They see boats all the time, and they have no fear.

Whales do have a commercial value and there are interests just waiting to cash in, even as they did in the glory days of worldwide commercial whaling. If we allow whaling to begin in America again, what can we say to Japan and Norway whose whaling we have opposed for years? We tried to get them to stop. Now we are going to allow commercial whaling again.

The real problem is, once we open the door to new worldwide commercial whaling, how do we ever close it again? Most Americans believe that we have risen above the wanton slaughter of the buffalo for their hides or the whales for the value of their body parts.

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I urge my colleagues to join me in opposition to the renewal of whaling by the Makah Tribe of Northwest Washington State.

SAVE OUR CHILDREN FROM GUN VIOLENCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SAXTON). Under a previous order of the