

and, access to approved clinical trials when no other treatment is available.

The importance of guaranteeing these rights cannot be overstated. Passage of a meaningful Patients' Bill of Rights will save lives.

Last Friday we heard the stories of two victims of HMO practices, Nick Enriquez and Serenity Silen. Both were children who deserved much better care than they received.

The story of Serenity's father's battle with his HMO to save his daughter's life epitomizes why we need a meaningful Patients' Bill of Rights.

Serenity was diagnosed with leukemia, but only after having been misdiagnosed four times because HMO's were not willing to pay for the cost of full medical diagnostic tests, such as a complete blood count.

After about 2 months, Serenity's father had to take her out of his HMO's network to finally get a proper diagnosis.

But it did not end there, when Serenity returned to the HMO for treatment, she received substandard care. At one point, when Serenity went into remission, she could have been given a bone-marrow transplant that would have increased her chances of survival. Instead, the HMO said a transplant procedure was "expensive" and only reserved as a last-ditch effort. But this delay jeopardized any future transplant, and fatally endangered Serenity's life.

After an exhausting struggle with the HMO, Serenity's father found a hospital outside of the HMO network that could provide proper care for her. But it was too late. Because of their focus on cost instead of care, the HMO created a time delay that resulted in irreversible damage to Serenity's health and caused her premature death.

We cannot let this type of practice continue. Health care decisions belong back in the hands of patients and doctors, not insurance company administrators who are only watching the bottom line.

Serenity's father said it best. "Children deserve to live." No child should ever have to go through what Serenity experienced.

Let us, together, do something about this.

Let us bring compassion back to health care.

Let us put patients first.

Let us pass a meaningful Patients' Bill of Rights.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, the gentleman is absolutely right. What we need is comprehensive Federal reform, and the Patients' Bill of Rights is the best and the most comprehensive managed care bill before the Congress.

I am just hopeful that with this electronic petition drive, that we will convince the Republican leadership and make them understand that they should not waste time, and they have to bring the Patients' Bill of Rights to the floor so we can pass it here, pass it in the Senate, and then send it on to the President, who indicated very strongly on Friday at our rally that he would sign this bill when it gets to his desk.

ONGOING KOSOVO CRISIS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SIMPSON). Under the Speaker's an-

nounced policy of January 6, 1999, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. WELDON) is recognized for half of the time remaining before midnight.

Mr. WELDON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I rise tonight in what I hope will be a nightly discussion in this body on what I think is one of the most dangerous involvements of our military in recent time; that is the ongoing situation in Kosovo.

It is my hope that Members on both sides of the aisle will rise on the House floor at the end of each day's session, as we saw to some extent in the 5-minute special orders today, to discuss the current situation, what our plans are, to interact and engage with the administration, not necessarily in a partisan way, but in a way to look for solutions that bring dignity to the people of Kosovo, that bring stability and sense back to the Balkans, and that provide the best possible course of action for the safety of American soldiers and those who are currently involved and those who might be involved in the Balkan Theater.

Let me first of all say that this should be constructive discussion, again, and should not be based on partisan rhetoric or name calling. Now, with our troops deployed in the air assault, should not be the time for us to tear down past actions even though we may disagree with them. But I think two things are certainly clear that we should make at the beginning of each of our discussions, so that no one can misinterpret the debate or the discussion in this country about America's position in Kosovo.

The first is that no one, including Milosevic, should underestimate America's resolve to stop the torture, the ethnic cleansing and the bloodshed that he has perpetrated on the people of his nation and especially the people of Kosovo. He should understand that Republicans and Democrats are united in their resolve to make sure that he is held accountable for the atrocities that he has perpetrated on innocent people. No one should underestimate our resolve in that area.

The second point that we should make clear at the outset is a simple one and one that we all agree on, and that is that we unequivocally support our troops. They are in harm's way right now. They have our full prayers and blessings. Each and every one of our colleagues in this body and the other body are doing everything possible to give our men and women serving on behalf of this Nation all the support, the resources, the tools, and the equipment and protection they need to carry out their mission.

Those two things are unmistakable. Those two things are not in the debate. We are committed to deal with Milosevic as a Congress and as a country, and we are behind the President in that. We are committed to support our

troops in their deployment that they are currently pursuing.

But, Mr. Speaker, I am concerned with some of the rhetoric that I am hearing on the talk shows. I have done appearances on the networks and today with CNN. I am listening to some of my colleagues and some of the discussion from the think tank experts inside the beltway here who are moving very rapidly toward the notion that we should prepare or, if not prepare, that we should actually deploy American troops on the ground.

Mr. Speaker, this is a very dangerous decision that we must consider carefully, completely, and thoroughly. Even though I did not agree with the President's initial position to get us involved in a NATO-sponsored air campaign, I do think that we need to have a discussion about where we go from here.

I think all of us listened to the White House tell us that perhaps a short period of time would transpire, when we started the aerial assault, and then Milosevic would in fact give in. Unfortunately, we are now into weeks instead of days, and there does not seem to appear to be a lessening of Milosevic's resolve.

But before we move into the next phase and prepare or actually send in American ground troops, we in this body had better have some very serious discussion and debate about what our policy is and what it should be, because committing ground troops carries heavy burdens.

I think we still have some other options. The ground troops from America should only be committed as a final resort, as a last resort when we have depleted and used up all other options that are available to us. I am convinced that we have not yet reached that point. In fact, I think we have some very serious things that we could be doing, which I will outline in a few moments.

I also want to make the point very clearly, Mr. Speaker, that when our colleagues and when the pundits inside the beltway talk about deploying our troops, they need to understand what that means. It is too easy for Members of Congress to say "send in the troops." These are not robots we are talking about. These are human beings. They are the sons and the daughters and the moms and dads of the American people.

When we commit our young people and our military personnel to go into harm's way, we had better have thought through the actual activity for which they are going to be involved. We better think about the objectives. We better think about the danger to their lives.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, my concern is that some of the people inside of this beltway want to commit our troops too

quickly, and that has resulted in a terrible problem that we are not now trying to deal with within the military.

In fact, let me show a chart here, Mr. Speaker, which I think sums up the situation very well. In the years from World War II until 1990 and 1991, all of the commanders in chief during that time period that started with Dwight D. Eisenhower and Harry Truman and then went on to John Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson, Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan and George Bush, in all of those years, under all of those Presidents, Republicans and Democrats alike, they committed our troops just 10 times, 10 deployments in 40 years, only where it was absolutely essential to put our troops in harm's way.

From 1991 until today with the Kosovo deployment, we have seen our troops deployed 33 times. Ten times in 40 years, 33 times in the last 8 years.

Mr. Speaker, none of these 33 deployments were budgeted for or paid for in advance. The cost for all of these deployments came out of an already decreasing defense budget. Bosnia up until now has cost the American taxpayers \$10 billion. All of that had to be eaten out of other defense requirements and priorities or had to be funded through special supplemental appropriations.

Kosovo, in the short period of time we have been deployed there, has cost the American taxpayer \$2 billion, and the daily price tag for Kosovo is increasing exponentially.

Members of Congress and pundits in Washington who are quick to want to commit our troops to this 33rd ground deployment need to understand that we have not identified, first of all, a way to pay for this operation.

But that is not the largest issue involved here, Mr. Speaker. Because we have deployed our troops 33 times in 8 years, because we have sent our troops from Macedonia, to Bosnia, to Somalia, to Haiti, to domestic situations, from Kuwait to now the deployment in Kosovo, the morale among our young people in the military is starting to suffer.

Today, Mr. Speaker, the retention rate for pilots in the Navy and the Air Force is the lowest it has been since World War II. The Army is having such a difficult time recruiting young people to go into the Army that they are now resorting to lowering the threshold. Secretary Caldera has suggested that we should now allow non-high school graduates to sign up for Army service. In fact, we have Navy ships at sea today who are 600 and 700 sailors short from the required optimum strength that they should be carrying in the deployments that they are completing.

These situations are not happening in a vacuum, Mr. Speaker. They are happening because of this deployment rate of committing our troops month

after month around the world in a number of situations which requires these young people to be away from their families and children for much longer periods of time.

In addition to morale problems, the cutbacks in our funding necessary to pay for these deployments are causing us to stretch out programs so that we are not modernizing our military the way we should.

I understand that President Clinton will be, or maybe he did today deliver a speech to our B-52 pilots. I am glad he did that. It is important to let them know that we are behind them. But I wish the President would address to them the fact that those B-52s are going to be flying when they are 75 years old because we have not provided the funding to replace those aircraft in a more timely manner.

That is the real tragedy of what we are doing with our rapid deployment, with our increased OPTEMPO rate, and yet not providing the support to maintain the readiness of our troops that they so desperately need.

All of those factors must be considered in the equation of whether or not America should put ground troops into Kosovo. I think it is a very serious challenge that we have ahead of us, Mr. Speaker, in considering whether or not we should support the administration's efforts to move forward with a multinational ground force, especially one that involves U.S. troops.

We need to understand that unless this Congress is prepared to address the issues that are causing morale problems in the services today, that are causing retention rates to be at the lowest point ever, to cause young military personnel to want to leave the service instead of reenlisting, then we have got a major problem.

□ 2245

I would challenge our colleagues, Mr. Speaker, that are so adamant today about committing ground troops. Are they prepared to support the reinstatement of the draft if we continue to have problems with young people not signing up for the military? Are they willing to vote to reinstate the draft, as we did during the Vietnam War, to suck young people in, to force them to go into combat?

That could be the need if we continue to have the problems that we are having because of the deployment of troops today around the world, troops that continue to provide cover in Haiti, continue to be in Bosnia, continue to be in Somalia, continue to be in Kuwait, continue to be in Macedonia, and now may be expected to go into Kosovo perhaps even in large numbers.

Mr. Speaker, I think the Kosovo deployment that is being talked about now by the U.N., whether it is under the title of peacekeeping or a military force, is going to involve conflict, it is

going to involve hostile actions, it is going to involve casualties, and it is going to involve loss of life. Before we make that commitment, this Congress needs to make sure that we have explored every other option.

Mr. Speaker, I come to the House floor tonight because I do not think we have explored every other option. I want to present one and I want to challenge the administration tonight to follow through on my suggestion.

Mr. Speaker, as many of our colleagues know, I focus a lot of my time on dealing with Russia. I formed and I chair the congressional initiative between our Congress and the Russian parliament, the State Duma. I have been to Russia a number of times. I host members of the Duma when they come to Washington, and I interact with Duma leaders on a regular basis. In fact, of the 450 members of the State Duma, I know over 150 members personally, including the leaders of all the seven main factions that lead the State Duma in their deliberations.

In fact, I was supposed to speak at Harvard University before the end of April to the visiting class of Duma deputies that Harvard runs a training program for each year to give them the orientation of the way our Congress works in America so that the Russian Duma can learn from our experiences.

Last week, the Russian Duma canceled the next visit that they were planning to make to Harvard. They canceled that visit because of the Kosovo situation. Last week, Mr. Speaker, I talked to my friend in the Duma on the phone, after having met with a couple of Russian leaders in person at a conference last week in Philadelphia.

One of my friends who is a senior leader of the support of the Russian Duma told me that in the 7 years since the reforms in Russia he had never seen the hostile feelings toward America as he is seeing right now because of Kosovo. In fact, he told me that almost every Duma deputy from the radical fringe of the communist and the LDPR's Zhirinovskiy faction to the moderate members of the Duma and Yabloko faction, every member of the Duma is expressing outrage, outrage not only at the continual bombing in Kosovo, the bombing of Serbia, but outrage that Russia was not brought into a fuller dialogue in trying to find a way to end this crisis.

In fact, one of my friends told me that it is a dangerous situation in Russia right now. With President Yeltsin having illness problems and, I think, widely acknowledged as not being in total control of what is happening in Russia, there is more and more feeling that Russia may do things that create serious instability between the U.S. and Russia. That would be an international tragedy.

If Russia were to start supplying military equipment to the Serbians or

if Russia were to even think about providing support in terms of forces to the Serbs, we would have a very, very dangerous and volatile situation.

We need to understand, Mr. Speaker, that there are some alternatives, and at least one that should be pursued. I understand that the President's initial action through NATO was to have the NATO countries, through a massive air campaign, bomb Milosevic into submission. Up until now, that has not worked. It may work in the future. And according to our President, we are in there for the long haul. That is going to be a terrible price we are going to pay both in terms of destruction to innocent people and buildings, also in terms of dollar investments on the part of the U.S.

My concern is that if we do not think through this process, we could see a situation where Russia could enter this conflict on the other side. I have no doubt that we would be victorious and that we would win any such battle. But, Mr. Speaker, we do not want Kosovo to be the start of a world war or a major conflict involving two nations with very capable nuclear weapons.

On Friday evening, Mr. Speaker, I received a telephone call from two of my friends in Russia who are involved in the State Duma. They had faxed to me earlier that day a memo asking if I would review a preliminary plan that they had put together that would perhaps provide a solution to end the hostilities in Kosovo. I read the document. I talked to the individuals on the telephone. I assessed their feelings about the Duma rallying behind this initiative. And then I called senior leaders in the administration to let them know that this had occurred and that I thought it was worthy of consideration.

Over the weekend, I had additional discussions. Today I talked to Members on both sides of the aisle, senior leaders of both parties, about their thoughts on the ideas presented by the members of the Russian Duma for our consideration. The individuals who called me, Mr. Speaker, asked me to give them my response about whether or not their ideas are realistic to begin a discussion.

Mr. Speaker, I think their ideas are worthy of consideration, and I encourage the administration to move in beginning negotiations which we could assist with in the Congress in terms of supporting, finding a new solution to the hostilities in Kosovo.

First of all, Mr. Speaker, the Russian side proposed to me that Russia would guarantee to the international community that no more ethnic homicide or ethnic cleansing would be carried on in Kosovo. The Russian side would guarantee that to the international community.

The second initiative that was proposed by the Russian side was that

Russia would see that Milosevic agreed to the agreements reached at the contact working group of the NATO coalition in Rambouillet. So the Russians were proposing as their second condition that Milosevic come to the table agreeing to the Rambouillet accords, which the President has said are critical.

The one caveat that they mentioned was that they thought that the international peacekeeping force that would be put into Kosovo to guarantee the security and the stability for the Kosovars to make sure that conflict ended and to guarantee the rights of those citizens would not involve the militaries of any of those nations that are today bombing Serbia, that those nations that would make up the ground forces to implement the agreement and the Rambouillet accord would come from nations that are not today involved in direct hostilities against the Serbs.

In fact, the Russians even proposed some example countries. They suggested perhaps that these troops could come from Poland, the Netherlands, Greece, Albania, even Russia itself, and other European nations who have not been involved in the bombing campaign against the Serbs.

Mr. Speaker, I think that makes absolute sense to have a multinational force to enforce the accords that were reached in Kosovo to protect the Kosovars, overseen by troops from countries that are not involved in the hostilities today, who would then report to NATO as to the progress of enforcing the agreed-upon arrangements that were negotiated under NATO's leadership.

The third recommendation that the Russians proposed to me, Mr. Speaker, was that we establish a bilateral commission, a bilateral commission that in fact would be assembled in an informal way to monitor the Albanian Government's compliance, the Serbian Government's compliance with the agreed-upon framework established by NATO so that the parliamentarians of both nations would be involved. Not to set foreign policy, not to overrule or supersede the authority of the one leader we have in America, and that is our President, but to make sure from a parliamentary standpoint that all aspects of both governments, both parties in this country and all seven factions in Russia were, on a daily basis, monitoring the compliance to the peace accords that had been reached, which Milosevic would have agreed to.

Mr. Speaker, I think these initiatives are worthy of discussion. I think these initiatives are the direction that we should be going in terms of dialoguing with Russia about the situation in Kosovo and our relationship with Serbia. I am not saying it is the end-all or the cure-all or a perfect solution. But this is far better to talk about than to

talk about preparing Americans to go into a ground war campaign and to look at killing more lives.

Someone at some point in time is going to have to pay to rebuild Serbia and Kosovo. We need to understand that it should be our top priority today to find a peaceful way out of this conflict that allows dignity and respect for NATO, that allows dignity and respect for the process that we use, that allows Russia to regain the dignity in their relationship in the past with Serbia, and that shows Milosevic that neither Russia nor the U.S. nor the allied nations will tolerate the kind of actions that he has perpetrated on the people of Kosovo.

That is the opportunity, Mr. Speaker, that we have right now.

I have offered to my Russian friends to engage them wherever that might take place. They have talked about coming here. If need be, we could go there. But we need to find a way to proactively engage Russia in this solution.

I also think there is one other point that we should make, Mr. Speaker. The American taxpayers each year put approximately \$600 million to \$1 billion of U.S. tax money into the Russian economy. We do it through the cooperative threat reduction. We do it through economic development assistance through the Department of Commerce. We do it through the Defense Department with joint military programs and exchanges. We do it through the Environmental Protection Agency through environmental initiatives. We do it through a multitude of agencies and operations of the Federal Government.

Not only do I think it is in our interest to have Russia be more involved, I think Russia has a responsibility. America has been very helpful in securing additional funding for the replenishment of the IMF so that Russia can continue to work economically. America has been very aggressive in helping Russia deal with environmental problems, nuclear stabilization. In fact, the President just proposed this year an increase of \$1.4 billion over 5 years to further help Russia stabilize its nuclear arsenal.

It is time that we called Russia in, not just through a long distance phone call, but in a real and substantive way, with all factions involved, from the radical left to the radical right, in helping us solve the problem of Kosovo in a way that reduces the risk of losing more lives, of damaging more property, and in a way that could lead to a further escalation of conflict.

□ 2300

So, Mr. Speaker, I rise tonight and I challenge the administration to take up the challenge that was given to me by my Russian friends who want to see us find a peaceful way, a peaceful way out of what is becoming a terrible tragedy and yet a peaceful way that recognizes that Milosevic is dead wrong and

must be dealt with in an aggressive, firm way. There is still that possibility. We must take up that effort. And we must stop the talking about a ground war operation, a ground campaign and subjecting young Americans in a way that is going to cost lives and cause serious hardship for American families.

REGARDING THE CRISIS IN KOSOVO

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SIMPSON). Without objection, the previous order for 5 minutes is vacated and the gentleman from California (Mr. SHERMAN) is recognized for not beyond midnight.

There was no objection.

Mr. SHERMAN. Mr. Speaker, like the gentleman before me who stood before this House, the distinguished gentleman from Pennsylvania, I rise to address this House regarding the crisis in Kosovo, and my speech will echo some of the themes that he addressed, particularly at the end of his presentation.

Mr. Speaker, our actions in Kosovo are motivated by the highest level of idealism. We are willing to spend our treasure and, much more importantly, risk the lives of our men and women, to prevent atrocities and to assure that the Albanian Kosovars will be able to live in peace and with autonomy.

In some foreign capitals, they simply cannot believe this level of idealism. They are scurrying to find some ulterior motive. But those who understand America know that we are in Kosovo motivated by that idealism and certainly not motivated out of a desire to have some interest in some mineral resources less valuable than a single B-2 bomber. We who understand America and understand American idealism, know that that idealism will be expressed through our government.

Yet even in such a great idealistic undertaking, we must establish a realistic strategy. We must make sure that our idealistic motivations do not cloud our judgment. And here, Mr. Speaker, I would like to contrast realism with blinding idealism.

In a more ideal world, Kosovo would be the only place of tragedy and atrocity. But realistically we should note that the government of Sudan has killed 2 million of its African citizens, and that killing continues tonight; that 800,000 Tutsis were killed in Rwanda; and there are continuing mass murders on an enormous scale in the Congo, Myanmar and elsewhere.

In an ideal world, we could hope to easily restore Kosovo as a multiethnic, semiautonomous region. Realistically it is unlikely that Albanians and Serbs will live in harmony in the absence of an outside force. And it is just as unlikely that the Kosovars will renounce their goal of independence.

A blind idealist might see the world as pure good versus pure evil. Yet the

Serbs, who we vilify today, were just a few years ago themselves victims of ethnic cleansing. Some 180,000 Serbs who had lived for centuries in Croatia were expelled from that country—while America said nothing, and did nothing. And the Kosovar Albanians, who are pictured today as the embodiment of all ideal virtue—we must remember that they are tragic victims of present circumstance—but they are represented in large part by the KLA, the Kosovo Liberation Army, an organization that the United States Government has described as terrorist, an organization that may have alliances with Iran, with Osama Bin Laden, and even with drug dealers.

Blind idealism would cause us to demand the maximum possible objective and believe that we could achieve that objective with the minimum force. Yet realism requires us to adopt perhaps more limited objectives consistent with the future safety of the Albanian Kosovars. And realism demands that we marshal the substantial force which may be necessary to achieve any realistic objective.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that we should take three steps.

The first echoes the comments of the gentleman from Pennsylvania. I believe that we should involve Russia in the diplomatic efforts to the maximum possible degree. Russia may be able to pull the Serbs to a negotiating position that is more realistic, and more just, than the position that Milosevic insists upon taking at the present time.

Russian involvement in both diplomacy and in peacekeeping offers a face-saving method for Milosevic to make major concessions.

Now, I know that there are those who will stand before this House and who will say we should not be negotiating with Milosevic, we should be seeking to dispose of him. But I would point out that we are still waiting for someone to dispose of Saddam Hussein. And in a realistic world, we must try to bring an end to the mass murder as quickly as possible.

Involving Russia is important beyond the events at hand. Ten years from now, Kosovo may be nearly forgotten if we are successful in bringing peace today, but Russia will continue to be a critical nuclear-armed state, and treating Russia with respect now will be important in our relationship with Russia in the future. And we should remember that 85 years ago, Russia mobilized its army in support of Serbia in events that led immediately to World War I.

Tomorrow, Secretary Albright will meet with Igor Ivanov, the Foreign Minister of Russia. That meeting will take place in Oslo. Hopefully this is the first step toward the maximum possible involvement of Russia in bringing peace to Kosovo.

Second, we should signal now that we are willing to reach peace on the basis

that the Rambouillet agreement would apply to roughly 80 percent of Kosovo territory rather than all of Kosovo.

No one denies that the Serbs have rights in Kosovo. They represented over 10 percent of the Kosovo population even today. When I say "today," I mean before the tragic recent events. Kosovo has been part of Serbia for centuries, and Kosovo is the religious and cultural birthplace of the Serbian nation. In fact, the Rambouillet agreement itself seeks to recognize Serb rights by stating that Kosovo would remain part of Serbia.

By leaving Serbs in control of the historically and religiously significant sites, including the original seat of the Serbian Orthodox Church, the most important of the monastery lands, and the battlefield of Kosovo Polje, on which the Serbs fought the Turks in the 14th century, we can make an offer that the Serbs can accept. Or, rather, Russia can make an offer that both sides can accept. In contrast, no Serb government, even one without Milosevic, even after 20 days of bombing, could accept the current Rambouillet agreement which the Serbs, and many other observers, believe would end all Serbian rights in all of Kosovo.

Certainly the Kosovar Albanians who represent roughly 85 percent of the population before the recent tragedy could live far better in roughly 80 percent of Kosovo's territory, protected by NATO troops as compared to asking those same people to live in refugee camps.

Third, we should begin training an army of Kosovar Albanians. This army should be independent of the KLA, and for now U.S. troops should control custody of the weapons while the training proceeds.

Milosevic may not believe that bombing will compel his departure from Kosovo, and he may not believe that NATO troops are willing to risk casualties in ground combat. But if there is an Albanian army being trained, then even Milosevic will know that there will be a ground force willing to absorb combat casualties which could be deployed in a matter of months.

□ 2310

This will hopefully impel him to negotiate now.

The administration asserts that bombing alone will bring Milosevic to his knees. If this is true, then we can cease the training operation and retain custody of the weapons without affecting the long term future of the Balkans.

There are those who insist that we try to achieve the maximum objective, Rambouillet applied to all of Kosovo with the minimum involvement of the Kosovars themselves. They advise deploying NATO troops while not even