

It would seem that over these last couple of days, so many of us have had the chance to express ourselves in words. There is a difficulty in that, for words can be soothing but, Mr. Speaker, they are not action, they do not stop the tragedy of what occurred, they are fleeting in their comfort, and they leave us looking for solutions.

Today, I was very pleased to join the President and First Lady and many members of the Cabinet and many Members of this House of Representatives and the United States Senate to once and for all put some action behind these words. First of all, we acknowledged that the people of Littleton, Colorado, were burying their dead children and with the pain that they experienced, we offered for them a moment of silence, hoping to connect in some way with the pain of bearing a teacher and students, children that were loved, children with futures, the pain that was experienced by that community, we hoped we could connect to it. But we also felt compelled, as I have done in the past couple of days, to do something more.

And so the remarks that were made today were very strong in action. They were also strong in passion. I hope that we were heard not only by the Members and those in the audience but really by America, because one of the most important things that was said by the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. MCCARTHY), America must express its outrage by action and America should stand up along with those who care about the proliferation of guns and gun violence by children against another incident like this happening and more words being said.

The first, Mr. Speaker, was I asked last week that you convene those of us involved in children's advocacy groups, caucuses that are part of the House, so that we can talk to each other about what we can do for children. Last week I also amended the juvenile crime bill to be marked up in Judiciary to provide a provision that deals with mental health services. Two-thirds of America's children do not have mental health services. We do not have a way of intervening, of risk assessment, we do not have a way of prevention and treatment. We do not listen to our children. We lock them up but we do not get into their minds ahead of time to find out about the anger, the anguish and the pain.

But we must realize that guns kill, Mr. Speaker, as well. And today we took a stand to eliminate the evilness of what guns do with children. First of all, 250 million guns in America, almost one gun for every American. Today, the President unveiled a package to increase the age at which you could get a gun and to hold someone liable for selling a gun to someone under the age of 21; to also hold parents responsible for those children who

get guns into their hands; to not allow gunrunning by limiting the gun purchases to one a month; to acknowledge the fact that yes, people kill but they use guns to kill.

And, therefore, Mr. Speaker, it is sad to note that the National Rifle Association was not standing with us. I am not against hunting, I am not against sports, using guns. I realize that we have freedom in this country, Mr. Speaker. But if we do not remove that culture of arguing the second amendment and that we need these guns for sports and we shoot ducks and other things and do not realize that we have got to get the assault weapons, we have got to get the proliferation of guns off the street, we have got to do something about guns in the hands of children. Now is the time. The moment is here, tragically.

I hope, Mr. Speaker, that we do not have to bury more children because we refuse to act. It is now time to ban guns from the hands of children, hold parents and adults responsible, move the age up to 21, stop buying guns and gunrunning, and ensuring, Mr. Speaker, that we do not have the bomb-making, if you will, recipes on the Internet, and that we do not allow our children to get guns in their hands.

Automobiles kill, yes, they do, Mr. Speaker, but most times it is classified as an accident. When guns are in the hands of individuals who are frustrated and angry and sad and in pain or just plain mean, they are intentionally used to kill people.

There is a time now, Mr. Speaker, to fight this gun siege and to end the tragic killings of our children. My sympathy to all of America. I ask that you stand up and be counted to make sure that we have a safer place for our children to live.

ON KOSOVO

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

Mr. KASICH. Mr. Speaker, it seems clear that the crisis in Kosovo is nearing a decision point. It is obvious that last weekend's NATO summit in Washington was a watershed. Now the administration and other NATO governments are talking openly of at least planning for the introduction of ground troops to secure Kosovo, something that the administration had until then denied it was even planning. Officials are using euphemisms like "troops in a nonpermissive environment," but the meaning ought to be plain.

At the same time, however, there have been high-level meetings between U.S. and Russian officials about the substance of Russian Envoy Viktor Chernomyrdin's mission to Belgrade over the weekend. There are contradictory reports coming out of Belgrade

and Moscow about exactly what constitutes a basis for negotiation. The Russians are saying that a UN-authorized force that included elements from NATO would be acceptable to Milosevic, but Milosevic later denied he had agreed to that. But yesterday the Yugoslavian Deputy Prime Minister insisted that such an international force was acceptable.

NATO governments have downplayed the significance of the Russian peace proposal. But before we consider the step of introducing ground forces into a conflict that I believe was unwise for America to have become militarily involved in to begin with, we ought to test such peace proposals before we think about military escalation. Likewise, the UN Secretary General, Koffi Annan, is scheduled to travel to Moscow on Thursday for discussions on Kosovo. Such visits should not be spurned or belittled if they are constructive steps, however halting and uncertain, on the path to peace.

I strongly believe that America should seize opportunities for peace rather than to seek opportunities to escalate the violence. We have to honestly ask ourselves whether we would pursue the same policy if we could turn the calendar back to March 24. Our bombing did not initiate ethnic cleansing in the Balkans, but we have to be candid in recognizing that it aggravated what was already a humanitarian tragedy. An important element of the Hippocratic oath in medicine is, first, do no harm. If U.S. policy was based on humanitarian considerations, it has clearly failed on that score.

Having embarked on this policy, the United States has now assumed a moral obligation to get Milosevic to withdraw his forces from Kosovo. He should help return the refugees in an orderly manner and work with us to generally assist in reconstruction, along with all of our allies and friends throughout the world. Just as surely, we need to help Albania and Macedonia economically, for they are bearing the brunt of the refugee crisis. But we must ask ourselves whether military escalation is the best means of achieving that. I have come to the conclusion that military escalation is neither in the national interest nor can it achieve a stable, long-term peace in the region.

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Those who have called for ground troops usually do not specify the goal. Is it to take Kosovo and occupy it for years, perhaps decades, against the threat of Serbian guerrilla warfare; or should the goal be to conquer Serbia with unforeseen consequences to wider Balkan instability, our relationship with Russia and our ability to respond to other regional flash points around the world? Do those who advocate such a course understand that it may take

months to properly build up such an invasion and force? How much more misery and devastation will have occurred by then, and does that serve the interests of refugees and innocent civilians?

I am not impressed by foreign leaders who take it upon themselves to lecture the American people about where our duty lies or how we must not be so misguided as to slip into isolationism. This argument is simply not warranted in light of the history of the last 50 years or in reference to the present situation. Responsible internationalism does not mean we must be stampeded into using force when our national interest is not well defined and other means short of force have not been exhausted.

I plan to offer a resolution with my colleagues, the gentlewoman from Florida (Mrs. FOWLER) and the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. GOODLING), a resolution that would neither mandate withdrawal on the one hand nor escalate the war and do a ground invasion on the other. This resolution would bar the introduction of ground forces from Kosovo and the rest of Yugoslavia. Why is such a course preferable? Because once having initiated hostilities, even if it was a policy based on flawed premises, we cannot simply walk away and wash our hands of the problem. The bombing has created certain facts: for our own policy, the perception of Yugoslavian government, and not least for the refugees. At the same time, however, we should avoid military escalation in a region where the only rational and durable solutions are political in nature.

I use the term "escalation" with good reason, because the parallels with Vietnam are striking. For that very reason this resolution would prohibit ground combat operations in Yugoslavia without specific authorization in law because the mission creep in Kosovo is similar to U.S. force deployments in the early stages of Vietnam. Viewed through the lens of history, our force buildup in the region and our edging towards ground combat operations could be the prelude to another Gulf of Tonkin incident. Members also should be aware that this resolution specifically exempts search-and-rescue missions.

But drawing a legislative bright line between bombing and boots on the ground is only one element of the solution. The problem is now bigger than Kosovo, and I believe America should actively encourage the mediation of a settlement before this crisis becomes a wider conflict. To the objection that mediation will not work, I say we will never know unless we, the United States, throw greater weight behind such efforts.

I do not underestimate the difficulties that are involved, but should Milosevic balk, we will retain the ability to apply military pressure from the

air. Once a settlement is reached, an international force may be necessary to assist the refugee return and oversee reconstruction. We should be more flexible about the makeup of this force than we have been in the past. Rather than making its composition a non-negotiable end in itself, we should bear in mind that the international force is the means to an end; that means to an end, peace and stability in Kosovo where ethnic Albanians can live in safety and with autonomy.

Last week I urged the President to call for a special meeting of the G-8 countries to begin a formal effort to achieve a peaceful settlement. This G-8 meeting could help initiate a framework for a diplomatic solution of the crisis and begin to put in place the foundation for economic assistance to the region. Delegations from the Ukraine and other affected regional countries could also be invited. Such a meeting is only the beginning of a long and difficult process, but it is a step our country should not be afraid to take.

I am pleased that the President appears to be responding positively. This week Strobe Talbott, the Deputy Secretary of State, was dispatched to Moscow for discussions on Kosovo, and I hope that these talks are a prelude to the heads of governments of the affected countries making a concerted effort at a political settlement.

The United States can and should remain strongly engaged internationally because regional instability will not solve itself. But we must choose our tools very carefully, for the stakes do not allow for failure. I believe America needs to draw a careful balance between our military and diplomatic efforts. Right now there is an imbalance in favor of military means. While maintaining the option of military pressure from the air, we should avoid boots on the ground or rather boots in a Balkan quagmire. That is why the Fowler-Kasich-Goodling resolution is the right approach and deserves the support of this House. In the longer term, however, we should seek opportunities for a lasting and enforceable political settlement.

WISHING DR. DAVID STRAND OF ILLINOIS STATE UNIVERSITY A HAPPY RETIREMENT

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

Mr. EWING. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in honor of a very good friend of mine, Dr. David Strand, to recognize his pending retirement as president of Illinois State University in Bloomington, Illinois. I would be remiss not to come here today to honor Dr. Strand, for throughout his long and distinguished tenure, spanning from 1978 until 1999 at

the university at Normal, Illinois, Illinois State University, Dr. Strand has helped shape the lives of thousands of young men and women. Over the years graduates of Illinois State University have traveled far beyond the borders of Illinois and have spread out around the country to become some of the best and the brightest in their respective fields.

As doctors, lawyers, educators, business professionals and civic leaders, these men and women have gone on to help shape the United States into the prosperous, peaceful and strong Nation we are today. Dr. David Strand through his years of service helped make this happen, and for this we, as a Nation, owe him a debt of gratitude.

Mr. Speaker, too often we fail to realize the importance of talented educators like Dr. Strand. Not only has Dr. Strand maintained the integrity and high academic standards for the university, but as a classroom professor, a professor of education, David has mentored countless young teachers, those men and women who will in kind touch thousands of other young lives. Those teachers and their students will secure the future of our Nation far into the next century, this in part due to the efforts of Dr. Strand.

As a community leader, David has made a permanent mark on his community and our State. He has worked with the public libraries, the community concert association and the Boy Scouts, just to name a few. He has been honored on many occasions by numerous organizations for his many community and professional accomplishments.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise and recognize David Strand for the contributions he has made to Illinois State University and the Bloomington/Normal community. David Strand is indeed an administrator, an educator and citizen that we, as a Nation, can and should with one voice say "Thank you."

Mr. Speaker, I enter this statement into the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD so this and future generations of Americans can be aware of the numerous contributions of a man I am honored to call a friend, Dr. David Strand of Bloomington, Illinois, and I wish Dr. Strand a happy, healthy and enjoyable retirement.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in honor of my good friend, Dr. David Strand, to recognize his pending retirement as President of Illinois State University in Bloomington, Illinois.

I would be remiss not to stand here today honoring Dr. Strand, for throughout his long and distinguished tenure spanning from 1978 until 1999 with Illinois State University, Dr. Strand has helped shape the lives of thousands of young men and women.

Over the years, graduates of Illinois State University, have traveled far beyond the borders of Illinois, and have spread out around the country to become some of the best and brightest in their respective fields.