

PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 1569, H. CON. RES. 82, H. J. RES. 44, AND S. CON. RES. 21, MEASURES REGARDING U.S. MILITARY ACTION AGAINST YUGOSLAVIA

SPEECH OF

HON. FRANK R. WOLF

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 28, 1999

Mr. WOLF. Mr. Speaker, I want to comment on the votes we are casting in the House today concerning U.S. military involvement in Kosovo. That the U.S. is mired in a Balkan conflict, not of our choosing, is not in doubt. I have been and remain critical of the course of action pursued by the White House that led to today. The White House simply did not think things through.

What has happened, however, is that while attempting to bomb Milosevic into oblivion and crushing the infrastructure of his country, a horror show of catastrophic proportions involving as many as 1.5 million ethnic Albanian refugees from Kosovo has been created. These refugees, about half remaining in Kosovo and half fleeing or being driven to Montenegro, Albania, Macedonia and elsewhere have been brutalized by Milosevic forces. They are fearful, homeless, without adequate food, water, sanitation, medical care and without much hope. Many have had family or friends killed and many more are injured or ill.

What has happened is exactly what NATO intervention had hoped to prevent. And exactly what many informed sources available to NATO and to the Administration predicted. But the Clinton Administration did not listen.

I have visited the Balkans a number of times to see things for myself. In February, just before the breakdown of the Rambouillet peace talks which led to NATO bombing of Serb targets, I traveled to Albania, to Macedonia and to Kosovo where I met with all parties—Serbs, KLA, representatives of the Rugova shadow government, men and women in the street, diplomats, NGO's and United Nations officials. Many predicted that ethnic cleansing would begin as Western officials left Kosovo in advance of NATO troops arriving had the peace accords been signed.

Even they must be shocked at the degree their prediction have been fulfilled by the brutality unleashed by Milosevic. Yesterday, I heard for the first time that refugees reported Serb forces have used flame throwers to kill and torture ethnic Albanians.

As reports of refugees streaming out of Kosovo filled the airways, I returned to Albania earlier this month to visit the Kosovo border crossing at Kukes and Morina to meet and talk with refugees. What has happened is so terrible I see no way the world can turn its back on them. Immediate care is a critical problem and so is the longer term need to provide for them. Nearly all wish to someday return home to Kosovo. But for too many, there is no home to return to. As they were driven away from their towns and villages, their burning and destroyed homes were visible behind them.

And now the world tries to work its way out of this mess. The White House and NATO

have not found the answer. Last week on April 21 here on the House floor I called on the President to convene a group of experienced and proven wise men and women to develop a workable Balkan strategy. Thus far, the White House only continues to bomb and hope and bomb and hope. Today the President announced a 33,000 reservist call-up. His response to the question of what to do if bombing didn't work was to bomb some more.

Congress and the American people are wondering what should be done. I'm not sure Congress has found the solution among the four measures being voted on today.

I am convinced that it is important for the world, for the U.S. and for NATO that we prevail in today's Balkan conflict. If NATO were to walk away it would be inhumane to the million-plus refugees. It would dangerously destabilize eastern Europe, leaving a huge refugee problem.

It also would permanently stain and call into question the credibility and will of the U.S. and NATO emboldening rouge governments around the globe to rise up for their own gain and power. If we walk away, what would that say to China, which is eyeing Taiwan? What would that say to Iraq, with its arsenal of biological and chemical weapons? What would that say to Iran, which could think the time was ripe to strike Israel? What would that say to North Korea, looking to its south?

More than that, it would just be wrong. Terrible crimes against humanity are being committed that cannot be allowed to continue. The world, including the U.S., must bring them to an end.

Today, Congress considers H.R. 1569, which provides that no funds will be used for ground troops in Yugoslavia unless the funding is authorized by Congress. It is critical that Congress be involved in any decision to insert ground forces in any military campaign, and the administration has an obligation to come to Congress, similar to President Bush's involving Congress in the Persian Gulf war. President Clinton has stated to the congressional leadership that he will consult with Congress on the use of ground forces. That's the time for this vote. To vote now to ban the use of ground troops when there are currently no plans for this action sends the wrong message. How this question is handled will establish a precedent for future administrations, so we must be careful and thoughtful.

H. Con. Res. 82, calling for the removal of the U.S. military pursuant to the War Powers Resolution, is an equally bad proposal and I do not support it either. If the purpose is to question the constitutionality of the War Powers Resolution which has been ignored by all presidents and congresses since it was enacted in 1973, a better test must be found that will not jeopardize U.S. forces, U.S. interests and the lives of all those refugees. Men and women in U.S. uniform are in combat now risking their lives. Three of them are being held as prisoners.

I also do not support H.J. Res. 44, declaring war on Yugoslavia. Calling for this vote is both frivolous and mischievous and serves no useful purpose. The world is faced with a serious problem in the Balkans which merits thoughtful consideration and action.

S. Con. Res. 21, authorizing air and missile strikes, acknowledges what is now taking

place in Yugoslavia. While support of this measure could send to the White House the message that Congress endorses the present "bomb to oblivion" strategy without regard to whether or not it works, not to vote for it would take away from the men and women now engaged in air combat in Serbia. America stands behind our soldiers, sailors, airmen and marines and a "yes" vote reaffirms this support.

Additionally, it would be wrong to send any message that could in any way provide aid and comfort to Milosevic. My "yes" vote is a vote in support of our men and women in uniform now risking their lives in the Balkans.

Again, I call on the President to assemble a group of wise men and women skilled in world affairs, diplomacy and the application of force to find resolution and keep an intractable Balkan problem from becoming an Achilles' heel to world peace.

The U.S. must find a winning strategy and unite behind it. Today's debate and votes are both healthy and necessary and a start to finding a solution. Had the President involved Congress and the American people in this matter at the outset, we might be closer to a resolution than we are. The President needs to come to Congress and the American people and tell us what is needed to achieve our goal and why.

CONGRATULATING THE BENJAMIN FRANKLIN SCHOOL ON ITS NATO PAINTING

HON. MARGE ROUKEMA

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 29, 1999

Mrs. ROUKEMA. Mr. Speaker, I rise to congratulate the students of Benjamin Franklin Middle School in Ridgewood, NJ, on the distinct honor of being one of only 19 schools across the Nation chosen to contribute a painting to the recent NATO Summit held in Washington, DC. This inspiring and impressive work of art—displayed at the summit to welcome world leaders—was a tribute to the nation of Canada created as part of the international celebration of NATO's 50th birthday.

The artwork project was an important part of the NATO summit, offering students an invaluable lesson in the history, geography and politics of NATO's member nations. It enabled young people from all over the country to participate in one of the most significant events of their lifetime—the gathering of world leaders celebrated the alliance that has safeguarded freedom and security since World War II and marked the beginning of a new era of partnership. And the artwork these students created will serve as a permanent symbol of the relevance of the transatlantic alliance to future generations in preserving peace and democracy.

Each participating school was assigned one of the 19 NATO countries and asked to interpret the three main themes of the summit—freedom, democracy, and partnership. Student artists worked with the colors of each country's flag, plus the NATO colors of blue and gold, to illustrate significant moments in history or culture. The 4-foot-by-6-foot acrylic paintings on canvas were then combined into a 10-