

SOUTHEASTERN EUROPE, THE MIDDLE EAST AND OUR FLAWED ENERGY POLICY

Mr. VOINOVICH. Mr. President, several weeks ago, Senator SPECTER and I had the unique privilege to represent our nation and this body during a visit to Germany, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Bosnia, Egypt and Israel.

While in these nations, we were able to meet with a number of government and non-governmental leaders who familiarized us with the current situation in southeastern Europe and the Middle East.

I found our discussions with these leaders to be extraordinarily educational and highly productive, and their insight helped us assess the broad spectrum of issues that shapes both of these volatile regions of our globe.

Our first stop was in Munich, Germany where Senator SPECTER and I spoke with members of the U.S. Embassy about trade, security and foreign policy issues facing the United States and Germany.

We also met with a number of leaders of the Munich business community to talk about trade issues affecting the United States and the European Union, (EU). Specifically, we discussed steel, bananas, and genetically-modified beef—all issues currently dominating our trade relations.

We further spoke about the deployment of the National Missile Defense system, our commitment to the ABM Treaty and the concern in the U.S. that the Europeans are moving away from their commitments to NATO.

Our second stop was in Belgrade, Yugoslavia. It was my first trip to Yugoslavia in many years; since before Milosevic came to power. I had been asked to go many times—even by the Patriarch himself—but I said that I would not go until Milosevic was no longer in power. I had taken the same view with regards to Croatia; I would not go there until Tudjman was gone.

The fact that in the last year I've visited both Croatia and Yugoslavia says that a lot about the change that has happened.

And I am proud of the fact that I was the first member of the House or Senate to visit Croatia's new president, Stipe Mesic, and that Senator SPECTER and I were the first U.S. elected officials to fly into Yugoslavia and congratulate President Kostunica.

I think it's important for the American people to know that our efforts in southeastern Europe are paying dividends for the cause of democracy, the rule of law, human rights and a market economy.

However, a part of me often wonders if we had taken as much of an interest in southeastern Europe in the early 1990's as we do today, perhaps we wouldn't have to have U.S. troops in Bosnia and Kosovo.

Still, we are making progress in restoring order and building peace, and

though some may not agree, it is in our national interest to be involved in the Balkans.

I was impressed with the leadership of Yugoslavia's President Kostunica. He has surrounded himself with bright, capable individuals who share their President's eagerness to bring their nation back into the fold of the international community.

Our discussion focused on a number of issues, including reintegrating Yugoslavia into the international community after Milosevic's downfall, the country's continuing economic challenges, the humanitarian issues facing the people—including a lack of power, medicine and medical equipment—and the situation in Kosovo, the Presevo Valley and relations with Montenegro.

I was also impressed with Zoran Djindjic, the Serbian government's prime minister. Our meeting largely focused on the same subject matters discussed with President Kostunica.

We also discussed in detail the war crimes issue and America's strong interest in seeing progress in this area. I reminded him that Congress had laid out conditions in the FY 2001 Foreign Operations Appropriations bill in order for U.S. support to continue.

From Serbia, we traveled to Bosnia to visit our American troops. We were met by Major General Smart who gave us an overview of the situation in Bosnia. He informed us that the men and women under his command understand the importance of their mission, have high morale and are performing beyond expectations.

After lunching with some of our men and women in uniform from Ohio and Pennsylvania, Senator SPECTER and I rode along with some of our troops on a Humvee patrol through the area.

I asked a couple of the young soldiers with whom we were patrolling what they thought would happen if the United States were to pull out of the region. They answered without hesitation that the ethnic hostilities between the Serbs, the Croat's and the Muslim's would almost immediately resume.

Their assessment—these two young men who are right in the thick of it—made it clear how important it is to maintain an ongoing international military presence in Southeastern Europe for at least the immediate future. In my view, Bosnia's government structure which was created in Dayton is fundamentally unworkable, and it must be reassessed if there is ever to be a lasting peace in Bosnia.

After a return to Belgrade for more meetings, we flew to Egypt, where we met with President Mubarak.

We had a detailed discussion about the latest peace plan put forward by President Clinton, Egypt's role in the peace process, and the comparative positions of the Israelis and Palestinians.

During the meeting, we encouraged President Mubarak to support Presi-

dent Clinton's peace initiative, and requested he urge other Arab leaders to support the peace initiative in Israel.

From Cairo, we went to Israel to meet with Shimon Peres, Ehud Barak and Ariel Sharon and other leaders to discuss the fragile peace process.

Mr. Peres felt that economic cooperation is a key to conflict resolution, believing that if people have something to lose in war or violence, they will be less likely to fight. We also discussed the issues of the day in the negotiations—the Temple Mount and refugee returns.

Mr. Barak expressed his disappointment at the failure of various peace initiatives, and concern that the Palestinians may be learning the wrong lesson: that continued violence strengthens their negotiating position.

He stressed the opposite: that violence is slowing the peace process and strengthening the negotiating position of the Israelis. Mr. Barak was hopeful that negotiations would continue throughout the American presidential transition and the Israeli elections. Thank God they have.

We then met with Ariel Sharon, and immediately discussed his controversial visit to the Temple Mount last September and the impact it had on the peace process. I indicated that many Americans felt it was inflammatory.

Mr. Sharon explained that his visit was a normal event and that every Israeli citizen has the right to visit the Temple Mount because of its religious significance. Evoking images of Richard Nixon, he further stated that he was the only candidate for Prime Minister who could reach a true peace agreement with the Palestinians.

After my meeting with Mr. Sharon, I joined U.S. Consul General Ron Schlicher for a dinner discussion with Faisal Husseini. Husseini is a leading figure in the Palestinian community. We had a lengthy discussion regarding the ongoing violence and tensions in Israel, prospects for peace, and the Palestinian perspective on the last 50 years.

The next day, I also met with Mr. Jawdat Ibrahim, a young Palestinian businessman who was deeply interested in the peace negotiations. I was interested in his view—and through him, the Palestinian view—on current events. Our discussion was interesting and it added an important perspective to my trip.

Mr. President, at this time, I ask unanimous consent that a longer statement outlining many of the observations that I was able to make over the course of our trip be printed in the RECORD following my remarks.

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

(See Exhibit 1.)
Mr. VOINOVICH. Mr. President, one of the true benefits of traveling overseas is it gives lawmakers an opportunity to see first hand the political,

social and economic conditions of nations that many of us only read about in the papers or see on the nightly news.

It also allows us to see how these conditions in one part of the world can have a profound impact on an entirely different part of the world.

So it was with my trip to the Middle East, where I was able to see how events there have a direct effect on events in the United States. Many people in our nation do not realize this, but there actually is an "interconnect-edness" of issues between nations that sometimes we don't think about.

One thing that I have thought a lot about since my visit is just how much the "on-again/off-again" peace process in the Middle East affects our nation's energy policy, particularly as it relates to our national security.

While I was in Israel, I met with Richard Shotenstein, the Managing Director of the Ohio Department of Development's Eastern Mediterranean Regional Office, an office I created as Governor of Ohio.

He told me that the tensions surrounding the ongoing Middle East crisis have dramatically lessened the interest of Ohio companies in business opportunities in the region.

He also indicated that there is a growing anti-Americanism, largely seen in boycotts, spreading throughout the Arab world, where many view the U.S. and Israel as intimately linked. Thus, anti-Israel trends become anti-American trends.

This should be a concern of every American given the fact that today, the United States is more dependent on foreign oil than at any other time in history.

In 1973, at the time of the Arab oil embargo, we imported 35 percent of our oil to meet our domestic needs. Today, that number averages 58 percent and it is estimated that we could be importing 65 percent of our oil by 2020.

Unless we address our own domestic energy needs and become less dependent on foreign oil, we may be held to the whims of the OPEC nations, and indirectly, to the vagaries of the Arab world—particularly in Iraq, arguably our nation's biggest enemy.

On January 17, the New York Times reported that the OPEC nations were going to reduce oil production by 1.5 million barrels per day. Although this will likely drive up prices, the real problem to watch for is what Iraq will do.

According to the article:

If Iraq indeed keeps exports to a trickle, Saudi Arabia—as the largest producer in OPEC and its de facto leader—may feel compelled, as it has intermittently over the last year, to increase its own output to make up for the Iraqi supplies. But the Saudis might be able to replace only part of the oil that Iraq took off the market.

I shudder to think how Iraq would use its influence should they gain a

more dominant role in the production of crude oil in the Middle East.

It is one of the major reasons why a lack of a reliable supply of energy should be of great concern to all Americans.

Consider the rolling electricity blackouts that California is now experiencing. Consider also natural gas prices which are expected to skyrocket 70 percent by the end of winter according to predictions by the Department of Energy.

Add in the fact that home heating oil prices have already jumped by 40 percent and more, not to mention high gasoline prices, and it should become crystal clear that our country's lack of a comprehensive energy policy must be addressed.

Since at least the mid-1970's, Congress and presidential administrations of both parties have been unwilling, unable and unmotivated to implement a long-term energy policy.

As I have stated, the United States relies on more foreign sources of oil than at any other time in history. However, even if we wanted to increase the production of crude oil in this country, there has not been a new refinery constructed in 25 years due, in part, to changes in U.S. environmental policies.

Additionally, 36 refineries have closed since the beginning of the Clinton administration, in part, because of strict environmental standards.

Last year, the existing refineries were running at 95 percent capacity or higher for much of the year. With our refineries running at these levels, even if a greater oil supply was available, there would be no capability for refineries to turn it into useful products.

As a result, we must currently rely on overseas supplies at an astronomical cost from a region fraught with instability. Until new refining capacity is available, even minor supply disruptions will continue to lead to drastic increases in fuel prices. No one has dared contemplate what would happen should major disruptions occur.

In addition, natural gas heats 56 million American homes and provides 15 percent of the nation's electric power, for nearly one-quarter of our energy supply.

Because natural gas burns so cleanly, it is easier to obtain the environmental permits necessary to build natural gas-run energy plants. Thus, it is easy to see why virtually all new electric generation plants that are currently being built will use natural gas for fuel.

The popularity of natural gas is good for the air we breathe, but the high demand for it is beginning to pinch the pocketbook, resulting in soaring costs. We should not forget that other energy resources are available which can provide additional sources of clean, low-cost power.

New technologies are making coal an increasingly cleaner source of elec-

tricity. We should not forget this valuable, abundant natural resource—with an estimated domestic supply of 250 years—as we move forward with an energy policy that not only protects our environment, but also continues to meet consumer's needs for power.

I support efforts such as those in the National Electricity and Environmental Technology Act, introduced last week by Senator BYRD. His bill creates research and development programs that provide incentives for developing clean-coal technologies in the U.S.

As my colleagues know, if we are to decrease our dependence on foreign energy sources, research and development will be important to ensure that coal can remain a viable energy option in the future.

During this energy crisis, it is critical that we restructure our country's disjointed energy policy into a national plan that is comprehensive, cohesive and cost-efficient.

Last year, the Majority Leader and Senator MURKOWSKI introduced legislation to address many of these problems. I was proud to be an original cosponsor of that legislation in the 106th Congress, and I will cosponsor Senator MURKOWSKI's bill when he introduces it this year.

In addition, Senator MURKOWSKI and I sat down last week to discuss the role that environmental regulations play in our nation's energy policy. We agreed that it is imperative that we work to harmonize our environmental and energy policies so that clean, affordable and reliable energy can be made available to all consumers.

To help accomplish this goal, we both agreed that the key to a comprehensive energy policy will rely on environmental regulations that, while protecting public health and the ecosystem, are based on cost-benefit analysis and sound science. As Chairman of the Senate's Clean Air Subcommittee, it is something that I will work towards in the 107th Congress.

Finally, with the extreme cold weather we have experienced so far this winter compounding our current energy crisis, we need to encourage the President to provide more funding for the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program—LIHEAP—to meet the pressing needs of those who are most vulnerable to skyrocketing energy prices. Certainly if we have a supplemental this is an emergency that needs to be addressed in that.

Under LIHEAP, states are required to use the Federal funds they receive to provide the greatest level of benefit to the greatest need.

That means in my State of Ohio, some 220,000 households are expected to be helped this year—10 percent more than last year—with each household receiving payments between \$150 and \$400 to cover energy costs.

Last week, along with a number of my colleagues, I asked the President to provide \$300 million in emergency LIHEAP funds. Should he allocate these funds, it will help hundreds of thousands of low income families, seniors and the disabled get through our current energy crisis.

Our national security depends on our ability to guarantee a reliable energy supply. To do this, we must lessen our dependence on foreign oil, investigate alternative fuels and energy sources and ensure an adequate delivery and supply infrastructure.

At the same time we are developing this energy policy, we must insist that it does not result in diminishing our environment or public health. We cannot allow that to happen. We must continue to improve the environment and public health. It is a complex task, but one I know that we can accomplish if we work together on a bipartisan basis. We need to get the environmentalists, industry, and consumers—all of us in the same room talking to each other, so we can come up with a policy that is fair to everyone.

EXHIBIT 1

OBSERVATIONS IN SOUTHEASTERN EUROPE AND THE MIDDLE EAST, JANUARY 29, 2001

(By Senator George Voinovich)

On the morning of December 28, 2000, Senator Specter and I left Andrews Air Force Base for a 7 day assessment of the situation in Southeastern Europe and the Middle East and the prospect for peace in either region. The first leg of our journey consisted of an approximately nine hour flight to Munich, Germany where we were scheduled for an overnight stay. Arriving late that evening, we were met by Consul General Robert W. Boehme and John McCaslin, a U.S. Foreign Commercial Service officer. We had an interesting discussion about a variety of trade, security and foreign policy issues facing the United States and Germany.

The next morning, (December 29), Senator Specter and I met with a number of leaders of the local business community. We had an interesting conversation about a variety of trade concerns facing the United States and the European Union, EU. Specifically, we discussed the steel, banana, and genetically-modified beef issues currently dominating our trade relations.

When the conversation turned to technology, I was surprised to learn that the Germans are facing the same shortage of highly-trained information technology workers that our nation has been struggling with in recent years. This problem has been exacerbated by the growing number of entrepreneurs funneling venture capital into the high-technology sectors of the economy.

We also had an interesting discussion about National Missile Defense, NMD. The business leaders we met with explained their deep concern that the United States' commitment to an NMD system may create another Cold War with Russia and China. They were also concerned with our continued commitment to the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, ABM Treaty, and indicated that their views largely reflected those of the German people.

Finally, we discussed the European Union's, EU, European Security and Defense Policy, ESDP. Senator Specter and I made it

clear that many Members of Congress are concerned that our European allies are moving away from their commitments to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, NATO. The group responded by explaining that the Europeans will continue to view NATO as the foundation of the trans-Atlantic relationship.

After the meeting in Munich, Senator Specter and I flew to Belgrade in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, FRY. Ours was the first American plane to land in Serbia since the Kosovo bombing campaign in early 1999.

While a number of the buildings in the central section of the city were abandoned due to bomb damage, I was generally impressed with the city's landscape. It was clear that Belgrade was once the economic, political and cultural heart of Tito's Yugoslavia.

We immediately met with Vojislav Kostunica, the recently elected President of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia at the Federation Palace, and it was not lost on me that we were the first federally-elected officials from the U.S. to meet the man who toppled Slobodan Milosevic. He reminded us that it took Yugoslavia less time to elect their new president than it did for us to elect the President of the United States.

The President sat down with us after completing a meeting with Boris Trikosky, the President of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, whom I personally had met last February during a visit I made to Croatia, Macedonia and Kosovo. The discussion President Kostunica had with Senator Specter and me focused on the progress that has been made in reintegrating the FRY into the international community after Milosevic's downfall, the country's continuing economic challenges, the humanitarian issues facing the people (including a lack of power, medicine and medical equipment), and the situation in Kosovo, the Presevo Valley and relations with Montenegro.

We spent a great deal of time stressing to President Kostunica the importance of cooperation with the United Nations' International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, ICTY or the Hague. We made it clear that Congress will demand significant progress in this area in order for economic assistance to continue to be made available to the FRY. We also highlighted the view of many in the U.S. that Milosevic must be brought to justice for the crimes he committed against humanity in Bosnia and Kosovo; specifically, that he be brought to the Hague.

In response, the President indicated that he was very aware of American concern over the war crimes issue, and that he shared our concern but for very different reasons. Milosevic is thought to have stolen over \$1 billion from the people of Serbia during his rule, ordered the murder of many of his political opponents and manipulated the results of several elections, among other crimes.

President Kostunica made it clear that the Serb people want him to be held accountable for his crimes against the Serb people before he faces any international court or charges for war crimes. He also indicated that a domestic trial would begin to show to the people of the FRY what horrors were committed on their behalf over the last ten years.

He explained that Milosevic's control of the media prevented the vast majority of people from the truth about Bosnia and Kosovo. A trial would begin to present these ugly realities. He pointed out that the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia is expected to open an office in

Belgrade as a sign of growing cooperation and understanding between The Hague and the FRY.

The next meeting we held was with Miroslav Labus, the Federal Deputy Prime Minister responsible for economic policy, and his senior team. I was very impressed by his understanding of the various problems dragging down the Serbian economy. He made a point to stress the humanitarian crisis the country is facing.

He also made it clear that their efforts to reinvigorate the economy, attract foreign investment and begin to address the nation's debilitated infrastructure would not likely have an effect for several months. He explained that Milosevic's rule had left the economy in such a shambles that they were only now beginning to pick up the pieces.

I stressed the importance of resisting the traditional Balkans temptation to fill key jobs in the new government with family, friends and political allies. Given the troubles before them, now is not the time to bring in political hacks. Labus must assemble a clean, well-qualified team, and from what I saw, he has done so thus far.

I was very impressed by Deputy Prime Minister Labus and his team. The future Serbian Minister for Finance, Bozidar Djelic, and the FRY's Stability Pact Coordinator, Milan Pajevic, attended the meeting as well. It was clear that they understood the importance of addressing their people's needs in the short-term.

We then met with Zoran Djindjic at his campaign headquarters. Mr. Djindjic ran Mr. Kostunica's presidential campaign and has been active in the opposition movement in Serbia for years. It was widely reported that he would soon be installed as the Serbian government's prime minister, and in fact, on January 25, he was sworn in as prime minister. As my colleagues may not be aware, under the FRY's constitution, the prime minister of Serbia is given a great deal of power, thus, Mr. Djindjic will be intimately involved in finding solutions to the various problems facing his country.

The discussion largely focused on the same subject matters discussed with President Kostunica—reintegrating the FRY into the international community after Milosevic's downfall, the country's continuing economic challenges, the humanitarian issues facing the people (including a lack of power, medicine and medical equipment), and the situation in Kosovo, the Presevo Valley and relations with Montenegro. We also discussed in detail the war crimes issue and America's strong interest in seeing some progress in this area. I found Mr. Djindjic to be well-versed in all of these matters and largely aware of the official American position on them.

Of the various matters covered, the issue of Montenegro's relationship with Serbia was discussed in the most detail. Mr. Djindjic's passion for retaining the existing structure/relationship with Montenegro was clear. As some of my colleagues may know, President Djukanovic of Montenegro has indicated that, in response to the popular will of his citizens, he may be forced to hold a referendum on Montenegrin independence in the next few months. Mr. Djindjic indicated that such a move would create a crisis between Serbia and Montenegro which would have the potential to have a broader regional impact.

I then traveled to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for a meeting with Foreign Minister Goran Svilanovic. Again, in an effort to be consistent in my message to the new government, I explained in detail the importance of

cooperation with the International Criminal Tribunal, (The Hague). The Foreign Minister's response echoed that of the President and Mr. Djindjic.

I was pleased to know that Mr. Svilanovic is pushing EU membership as a long-term goal for the FRY. To that end, he plans on traveling extensively in the near future to explain the various issues facing his country, their plans to address them, and their long-term agenda. I am hopeful that he will be successful in this effort. I believe that a focus on EU membership will encourage changes within the FRY that will further instill a commitment to democracy, the rule of law and human rights.

For dinner that evening, I was pleased to join U.S. Ambassador to the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, William Montgomery, Foreign Minister Svilanovic, Professor Vojin Dimitrijevic, who is head of the Belgrade Human Rights Committee, and Milan St. Protic, the Mayor of Belgrade. It was widely expected at that time that Mayor Protic would be named as the FRY's Ambassador to the U.S. and since we've been back in the United States, it has actually occurred. As a matter of fact, just last week, I met with Ambassador Protic to discuss a variety of issues of concern to his nation.

The dinner we had in Yugoslavia included a frank, wide-ranging, off-the-record discussion, where we exchanged views on the opposition movement in Serbia during the Milosevic years, the Bosnia tragedy and Kosovo. It was a dinner that I am not likely to forget soon.

The morning of December 30, Senator Specter and I met with His Holiness Paul, the Patriarch of the Serbian Orthodox Church, at the Patriarchate. The Patriarch discussed the importance of reconciliation between the various peoples of southeast Europe to the future of the region.

He pointed out that cooperation and mutual respect between the various ethnic groups in the region, between the Serbs and Albanians in Kosovo, for example, is impossible while violence continues. He expressed his deep concern and remorse that nearly 100 Serbian Orthodox religious sites, included centuries-old churches, had been destroyed in Kosovo since the completion of the 1999 NATO bombing campaign.

The Patriarch gave me a copy of a booklet that the Serbian Orthodox Church prepared on the number of churches gutted, damaged and destroyed. I told the Patriarch I had read it and had shared copies that I had been given by Father Irini Dobrevich with some of my colleagues.

I reminded the Patriarch that I met with Bishop Artemije on his visit to the UN and the United States last year and indicated that he is an effective voice for the Serbian Orthodox Church in Kosovo. I stated that because of the efforts of people like Bishop Artemije, the U.S. State Department is a little more focused in terms of their involvement and concern with Yugoslavia.

Further, the Patriarch Senator Specter and I discussed the terrible ethnic cleansing that had happened and was continuing to happen in Kosovo, and I asked him to keep me updated on the ongoing situation in Kosovo.

Finally, I thanked him for the leadership role the Orthodox Church played in the removal of Slobodan Milosevic and their push for free and fair elections, and for establishing a Serbian Orthodox Church office in Washington, led by Father Irini Dobrevich. I have gotten to know Father Dobrevich and find him to be a breath of fresh air in Wash-

ington. He has worked hard on behalf of Serbs in diaspora and continues to respond to the many ongoing humanitarian needs in the FRY.

Senator Specter and I then flew to Tuzla, Bosnia where we were met and briefed by Major General Walter M. Sharp. Major General Sharp commands Multi-National Division, a force of some 7,000 soldiers. He was happy to report that the men and women under his command understand the importance of their mission, have high morale and are performing beyond expectations.

After the overview, we traveled to Camp Dobol where we shared lunch with a number of Ohioans and Pennsylvanians serving their nation in Bosnia. And I have to say that we as a nation should be very proud of all of our young men and women who serve their country, not just in Southeastern Europe, but all over the world.

Senator Specter and I then rode along with some of our troops on a mounted patrol through area. It quickly became clear to me that General Sharp's comments about the morale and performance of his people were accurate.

Although some of the scenery looked very peaceful, it belied incredible tension in the area. I asked a couple of the young soldiers with whom we were patrolling what they thought would happen if the United States were to pull out of the region. They answered without hesitation that the ethnic hostilities between the Serbs, the Croats and the Muslims would almost immediately resume.

Their assessment made it clear how important it is to maintain an ongoing international military presence in Southeastern Europe for at least the immediate future.

After our tour, we returned to Belgrade for more meetings.

We met with Momcilo Grubac, the Federal Minister of Justice at the Federation Palace. Mr. Grubac stressed his government's commitment to the rule of law. He explained that his first task will be to modernize the legal framework within the FRY to bring it into compliance with international standards. He was quick to point out that the years under Milosevic had set the country and its people behind in this area.

Again, we discussed in great detail the importance of cooperation with the international community on war crimes. As expected, his comments largely reflected those of President Kostunica. However, he did indicate that the FRY will no longer harbor indicted war criminals. He added that an internal criminal proceeding to deal with Milosevic would be important to further establishing democracy in the FRY.

We then traveled to the Federal Parliament Building where we met with Dragoljub Micunovic, the President of the Chamber of Citizens, and a number of other leading parliamentarians. On the war crimes issue, Mr. Micunovic agreed that accountability must be established to remove the sense of collective guilt that is beginning to become more and more prevalent in the FRY. On Milosevic specifically, he indicated his strong belief that Milosevic would be tried domestically and by the international community if there were evidence to support charges.

Senator Specter and I then joined Mr. Micunovic at a press conference to discuss our meeting and our general impressions from our visit to Belgrade.

I explained my position about the bombing campaign, that I really believed that other diplomatic routes should have been pursued

in dealing with Milosevic. I also explained that had the U.S. not legitimized Milosevic's leadership at Dayton, and not refused to support the resistant movement in 1997, the situation could have been a lot different in Serbia. There could have been an earlier removal of Milosevic from office and avoidance of the whole war, and the death, destruction and human suffering that accompanied it.

One of the questions I was asked was whether the U.S. and/or NATO leaders should appear before a war crimes tribunal for the air war conducted over Kosovo. I made it very clear that the responsibility for the bombing rest solely with Milosevic—not the United States or any of her officials, nor NATO. To those in NATO and the U.S., Milosevic and his thugs were a cancer that had to be removed from Serbia for the crimes he has committed. With Milosevic out of power, it is now possible to stabilize southeastern Europe, integrate Serbia into the EU and improve the standard of living and quality of life of all the Serbian people.

That evening, I joined a number of OTPOR activists for dinner. As my colleagues may know, it was the demonstrations by OTPOR members against Slobodan Milosevic's attempt to steal last autumn's election from Mr. Kostunica that hastened the downfall of Milosevic. I was heartened by the youthful spirit of the people I met and I suggested some new roles that they could play now that Milosevic has been removed from leadership.

I was thoroughly impressed with the quality of this group of leaders in Yugoslavia, men and women who were able to mobilize a nearly 70 percent youth vote turnout in the election that toppled Milosevic. I am sure that they will continue to be a significant force for democracy in the years ahead.

The next day (December 31), we traveled to Cairo, Egypt where we met with U.S. Ambassador Daniel C. Kurtzer. He explained that President Mubarak, with whom we were planning on meeting the next day, was consumed with the Middle East peace process.

With that in mind, we discussed the political environment among the Arab and Israeli peoples, Prime Minister Barak's political position in light of the upcoming elections in Israel and Arafat's negotiating positions in the discussions.

The morning of New Year's day (January 1, 2001), we met with President Hosni Mubarak at his presidential complex in downtown Cairo. We had a detailed discussion about the latest peace plan put forward by President Clinton, Egypt's role in the peace process, and the comparative positions of the Israelis and Palestinians. During the meeting, we encouraged President Mubarak to support President Clinton's peace initiative, and that he should urge other Arab leaders to support the peace initiative in Israel.

After meeting with President Mubarak, Senator Specter and I had a news conference where we indicated that we would send out a telegram encouraging other Arab leaders to come out publicly in favor of the initiative. We also announced that we would be urging President Clinton to meet with Chairman Arafat for the purpose of clarifying the details of the proposal and to keep the parties talking to one another rather than seeing the peace discussions end precipitously. Later that day, we sent a telegram encouraging other Arab leaders to come out publicly in favor of the initiative and continuing the negotiations. We were pleased that ultimately the President did meet with Arafat and that the Arab leaders came out and said that they were supportive of the initiative.

I found President Mubarak to be an engaging, affable man, committed to peace yet struggling to maintain a very difficult political position. Given Egypt's crucial role in maintaining relative peace in the region since the Camp David Accords, it was an honor to meet him. I believe his role will be crucial in the coming weeks, months, and years if peace is to truly be reached in the Middle East.

After the meeting and press conference, we flew to Tel Aviv and then drove to Jerusalem for a series of meetings. Our time in Israel began with a discussion with U.S. Ambassador Martin Indyk who updated us on the American perspective on the peace negotiations. We examined the right of return and Temple Mount issues in some depth which quickly confirmed my impression that the issues facing the negotiators are incredibly complex.

We then traveled to the Knesset building where we had a series of meetings. We first saw Shimon Peres, a friend I have known for years. He indicated that he did not believe that the schedule imposed on the ongoing peace talks, considering the U.S. presidential transition and the upcoming election for prime minister in Israel, was realistic. I agreed.

I believe that it was a mistake and is a mistake to set deadlines on the discussions because they create unnecessary pressure. I believe that it is best to continue an active, open dialogue for as long as necessary, even if it appears that little progress is being made.

Mr. Peres commented how advances in information technology had fundamentally altered the worlds of diplomacy and warfare. He also explained that one of the keys to peace in the region that has not been properly addressed is economic cooperation.

He believes that if people have something to lose in conflict or violence, they will be less likely to fight. This is a message I had received from him several years ago and was crucial in my decision when I was Governor of Ohio to open a Middle East trade office, the Eastern Mediterranean Regional Office, in Israel.

We then discussed the issues of the day in the negotiations—the Temple Mount and refugee returns. As always, I found his analysis to be insightful.

Senator Specter and I then visited with Prime Minister Ehud Barak. As my colleagues would expect, the peace process was the only matter discussed.

Mr. Barak expressed his disappointment at Camp David's failure and the various peace initiatives attempted since then. He also expressed his concern that the Palestinians may be learning the wrong lesson in recent months—that continued violence strengthens their negotiating position. Rather, he made it clear that violence is slowing the peace process and strengthening the negotiating position of the Israelis.

Mr. Barak was hopeful that negotiations would continue throughout the American presidential transition and the Israeli elections. It was clear, however, that the continued violence was putting a great deal of pressure on him.

We then met with Ariel Sharon who is widely expected to defeat Mr. Barak in the upcoming elections for prime minister. We immediately turned to his controversial visit to the Temple Mount last September and the impact it had on the peace process. I pointed out to him that many of us felt that his visit was inflammatory, that it did nothing to aid the peace process and that if

elected Prime Minister of Israel, he would have to make it very clear that he was for peace. Mr. Sharon explained that his visit was a completely normal event and that every Israeli citizen has the right to visit the Temple Mount because of its religious significance. I also expressed my opinion that in visiting Israel for the sixth time in twenty years, the situation there was more critical and explosive than I'd ever seen.

We then discussed his plans for the peace process, should he be elected prime minister. He made a number of strong statements regarding his commitment to the process. He argued that since only President Nixon could open the door to China, only he could come to a peace agreement with the Palestinians given his military background.

After the Sharon meeting, Senator Specter traveled on to Jordan to continue examining issues in the Middle East. I remained in Jerusalem to continue to examine the situation in Israel.

That evening, I joined U.S. Consul General Ron Schlicher for a dinner discussion with Faisal Hussein. Hussein is a leading figure in the Palestinian community. We had a lengthy discussion regarding the ongoing violence and tensions in Israel, prospects for peace, and the Palestinian perspective on the last 50 years.

I thought it was important that I have a balanced understanding of the current situation in Israel and was pleased to have the opportunity to meet with Mr. Hussein.

The next day (January 2), I met with Ehud Olmert, the Mayor of Jerusalem. I met Mr. Olmert on my fourth trip to Israel in 1993. He indicated how important it was to retain Jerusalem's integrity during the course of the peace negotiations.

He also argued that the various plans being considered, including President Clinton's proposal, were fundamentally flawed on this point. He strongly believes that the people of Jerusalem, his constituents, will never agree to a divided capital city. Richard Shotenstein, the Managing Director of the Ohio Department of Development's Eastern Mediterranean Regional Office, attended the meeting with Mayor Olmert.

Afterwards, I spoke with Mr. Shotenstein regarding the Office's recent activities. While there have been some great successes, he explained that the tensions surrounding the ongoing Middle East crisis have dramatically lessened the interest of Ohio companies in business opportunities in the region.

He also indicated that there is a growing anti-Americanism, largely seen in boycotts, spreading throughout the Arab world. This trend has especially impacted consumer products. Mr. Shotenstein explained that to many in the Arab world, the U.S. and Israel are intimately linked. Thus, anti-Israel trends become anti-American trends.

I then met with Mr. Jawdat Ibrahim, a young Palestinian businessman who was deeply interested in the peace negotiations. I was interested to see his view—and through him, the Palestinian view—on current events. Our discussion was interesting and it added an important perspective to my trip.

Later that day, I met with a group of Ohioans now living in Israel. After meetings with various political leaders, I wanted to have an opportunity to discuss the issues of the day with people whose lives are affected by the ongoing violence. The group made it very clear that there was a very real sense of fear living in Israel.

Some described risking their life simply driving to and from work. Others feared that their car would explode when they started it

every morning. Still others recounted phone calls from relatives living in America expressing concern about the safety of their grandchildren. I cannot imagine living with this kind of fear.

The last day of the trip (January 3), I had a telephone conversation with Benjamin Netanyahu. While I was disappointed that scheduling conflicts prevented our meeting in person, I found his analysis of the situation in the region to be very insightful. I hope to have the opportunity to meet him on my next visit to the region, although he indicated that he would make it a point to meet with me the next time he visited the United States.

Following my phone conversation, I had another meeting with Ambassador Indyk to discuss the various things I had learned during my visit to the region.

I was pleased to travel with my colleague, Senator Specter, to two of the most important regions to our national security at such a crucial time. I gained valuable insight as to the fragility of peace, and came away with a new and deeper appreciation for our American democracy.

Mr. President, as we welcome a new administration to the White House, I am hopeful that President Bush and his foreign policy team will be successful in promoting peace, stability and prosperity in these areas. We must never forget that both southeastern Europe and the Middle East are important to our national security and our nation's future.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wyoming is recognized.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

NOMINATION OF ELAINE LAN CHAO, OF KENTUCKY, TO BE THE SECRETARY OF LABOR

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. President, I now ask unanimous consent the Senate proceed to executive session to consider the nomination of Elaine Lan Chao, of Kentucky, to be Secretary of Labor, notwithstanding the consent of January 24, 2001, that the time of the nomination be yielded back, and the nomination be confirmed, the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table, the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action, and the Senate then resume the pending business.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, reserving the right to object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nevada is recognized.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I want to bring to the attention of all Senators that this will mean we have approved in such a short period of time 12 of President Bush's 15 nominations and that tomorrow afternoon we will approve two more, leaving only one. I want the record to be spread with the fact that that is pretty good work of the U.S. Senate. We look forward to completing all 15 in the near future.

I withdraw any objection that I have. The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection? If not, the nomination is confirmed.

Mr. THOMAS. Thank you, Mr. President. Certainly all of us are pleased