Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

Since I reported to the Congress on March 25, 1999, under section 8115 of the Department of Defense Appropriations Act, 1999 (Public Law 105–262), there have been dramatic and very serious developments in Kosovo and the region, particularly Macedonia and Albania. Belgrade’s sustained and accelerating repression and ethnic cleansing in Kosovo has created a humanitarian crisis of staggering dimensions. Estimates are that more than 800,000 Kosovars have been displaced from their homes and villages, with large concentrations in Albania, Macedonia, and Montenegro, and with the numbers rising dramatically every day. Throughout Kosovo, Serb forces have burned villages. Homes throughout the region have been looted and are smoldering. In Pristina, Kosovars are being forced into rail cars and shipped to the Macedonian border.

As the refugee flow out of Kosovo has surged, the limited ability of Albania and Macedonia to deal with the situation has been overwhelmed. The international organizations engaged in refugee assistance do not currently have in the region the ability and resources to deal with a refugee crisis of this magnitude. Unless adequate care can be provided for these refugees, a humanitarian disaster of immense proportions will result. In addition to the human suffering involved, such a disaster carries with it the very real possibility of destabilizing the governments and societies of Albania and Macedonia. This disaster could have the effect of spreading violence in the region that NATO is determined to prevent.

In the light of these disturbing events, I have directed that additional U.S. forces be deployed to Albania and Macedonia in order to support disaster relief by, among other activities, delivering food and essentials, constructing shelter, providing coordination and assisting in onward movement, and when necessary, providing protection for relief supplies and refugees. In regard to the elements of section 815(a)(1)–(8), I am providing the following information.

1 & 2. National Security Interests. I hereby certify that the deployment of additional forces to Albania and Macedonia as described above is necessary in the national security interests of the United States. These actions will provide additional forces to aid in the relief efforts supporting Kosovar refugees. They also will contribute to the overall effort to stabilize this region that has historically been a tinderbox, thereby helping to preserve peace and security in the region.

3. Numbers. The number of U.S. personnel who will be deployed for these purposes cannot be definitively provided at this time, since planning for the deployment is ongoing. I would anticipate, at a minimum, a deployment of 1,000 personnel. It can be anticipated that headquarters elements, air crews, airlift control elements, selected transport and rotary wing aircraft, security personnel, civil affairs and psychological operations personnel, medical and engineer forces, and logistics support forces may become involved in the operation. These forces will operate under U.S. and NATO operational control. I will ensure that the Congress is informed in a timely manner about deployments described in this report when the information is available.

4. Mission/Objectives. As stated above and in my report to the Congress of March 25, the overall objective of our efforts with our allies is to maintain stability in the region and prevent a humanitarian disaster resulting from the ongoing offensive against the people of Kosovo. The specific military mission of the forces deployed as described in this report would be to support disaster relief operations to aid in the care and protection of Kosovar refugees and to provide for their own security.

5. Schedule. At this point, it is not possible to determine how long these deployments to Albania and Macedonia in response to this dire need will be required. This will be affected by how long Belgrade continues its campaign of ethnic cleansing and how long beyond the cessation of that campaign it will take before the Kosovar refugees will be able to return to their
Letter to Congressional Leaders Reporting on the Deployment of United States Forces to Macedonia and Albania

April 4, 1999

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

Further to my report to the Congress of March 25 and April 3, 1999, under section 8115 of the Department of Defense Appropriations Act, 1999 (Public Law 105–262), this report is to inform you of my decision to deploy additional U.S. forces to Albania in support of ongoing NATO air operations to reduce the capacity of the Serbian military and security forces to conduct offensive operations.

In particular, rotary wing, artillery, and tactical missile systems will be deployed to establish...