

**Prepared Statement of  
General Henry H. Shelton  
to the Senate Armed Services Committee  
Hearing on Operations in Kosovo  
July 20, 1999**

Mr. Chairman, thank you for the opportunity to appear before this distinguished committee. I welcome the chance to meet with you today to talk about Kosovo and the vital work the members of America's armed forces are doing there for our Nation and for the world.

Let me begin by recognizing the young men and women who did the heavy lifting during Operation ALLIED FORCE and who are now on the ground in Kosovo.

Whether flying in the dangerous skies over Serbia, turning wrenches on the rainy ramps at Aviano Air Base, bringing in relief supplies and building safe havens for refugees in Albania or at Fort Dix, or patrolling the streets of Kosovo, they have performed superbly with great skill, determination, and courage. Our success in the air campaign is the direct result of their efforts and I know that you join me in applauding their professionalism and courage and that of our allies.

As I have said many times before, it is an honor to serve with our men and women in uniform, and a greater honor to represent them.

Let me also thank the members of this committee and the Congress for your support throughout Operation ALLIED FORCE. Your backing of our troops sent a strong signal of our resolve and we appreciate your continued support of America's soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines.

Although there is a long way to go before peace and stability are restored in Kosovo and the entire region, the US

and NATO can and should take pride in the success of Operation ALLIED FORCE.

Despite the challenges posed by a robust, multi-layered air defense system, very rugged terrain, and challenging weather, the air campaign accomplished the stated military objectives, as well as the political objectives of the US and the NATO alliance. Today, the Serbian military, paramilitary, and special police have withdrawn from Kosovo; an international peacekeeping force, with NATO at its core, has over 33,000 troops already in place; and over 650,000 Kosovar refugees have returned to their homes.

Although Operation ALLIED FORCE was a success, there are – as in every military operation – areas where we can improve our performance, and we are committed to examining the operation carefully to identify what worked and what didn't, and to determine the implications of ALLIED FORCE for our military.

As the Secretary mentioned, our Kosovo Quick Look study is designed to rapidly capture the most critical lessons learned and to begin the detailed assessment that will lead to long-term doctrinal, organizational and technological changes. The Commander in Chiefs, each of the Armed Services, every Defense Agency, and the Joint Staff are now in the process of conducting their internal reviews. We hope to have the Quick Look After Action Report complete by the end of the summer. However, we need to remember that the situation in Kosovo, like every international challenge, had its own unique circumstances the result of distinct military, cultural, geographic, political, and economic factors that formed the context for this situation.

What was successful in this conflict may not be in another and we must resist adopting a "one size fits all" mentality when it comes to making decisions about military strategy and operations.

I believe that the process now underway will serve the Nation well and will help us to draw the right lessons from this conflict. We look forward to working with you on the results at the appropriate time.

Building on the success of Operation ALLIED FORCE and creating the conditions for long-term stability require establishing a secure environment in Kosovo and creating civil administrative functions under the United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK).

I have just returned from Kosovo, and I can tell you that the forces on the ground are doing extremely well in performing the military tasks needed to provide a secure environment.

Currently, well over 80 percent of KFOR's military force is in place and the demilitarization of the ethnic-Albanian armed groups is proceeding. So far, the UCK leaders appear to be complying with their commitment to turn in heavy weapons and demilitarize.

Accomplishing the military tasks, however, will not be enough. Our extensive experiences in contingency operations over the past decade, ranging from Haiti to Bosnia, have made it clear that solving problems rooted in religious, cultural, or ethnic strife requires more than ensuring a safe and secure environment, as our military forces are capably doing.

To create a lasting and durable solution, other organizations must move in and carry out the host of civil, political, and economic tasks necessary to build a better

future. In this regard, we are concerned about the slow progress in establishing UNMIK the United Nations Mission in Kosovo to aid in the recovery process.

This organization is beginning to do good work, but it is critical that it become fully staffed and fully functional quickly to carry forward the next phase of the "heavy lifting" the establishment of the essential civilian institutions.

It is important to note that Kosovo is not Bosnia – there is, for example, less risk of an outbreak of widespread internal armed conflict among the entities. Therefore, we believe it may be possible to reduce KFOR once UNMIK is fully established. Nonetheless, our involvement in Kosovo will not be concluded quickly. As the Secretary mentioned, our departure does not depend on an end date, but on accomplishing the mission and that will take time. We do not intend, however, to make this involvement either permanent or indefinite.

I also want to underscore the Secretary's caution about the dangerous and potentially deadly situation KFOR still faces. Thanks to thorough planning and superb execution by the troops on the ground, we have thus far avoided losing any of our soldiers, though some have been wounded. We have been very fortunate. Nonetheless, the prospect of casualties remains very real.

Mr. Chairman, Let me conclude by again expressing my gratitude to the members of this committee for your support of the exceptional men and women we have in uniform.