

**Prepared Statement of the Honorable William S. Cohen
to the Senate Armed Services Committee
Hearing on Operations in Kosovo
July 20, 1999**

Mr. Chairman, it is always an honor to return to this Committee. Today I am proud to report to you on the outstanding job the men and women in our Armed Forces, working with our NATO allies, have performed in carrying out Operation ALLIED FORCE. I wish to thank the Committee for its support during the course of this operation and especially you, Mr. Chairman. You were an early advocate of decisive action in Kosovo, and you led the effort to enact legislation to authorize the air campaign.

NATO Reasons for Engagement

The world's attention has been focused on the humanitarian aspects of the conflict in Kosovo, on the brutality of ethnic cleansing, and now on the rapid return of most refugees to their homes. NATO's action, however, was not only a response to the obvious imperative to do what we could to redress outrages against basic humanitarian standards. It had a strategic, as well as a humanitarian, purpose. Our strategic goal in Kosovo has been to protect regional stability in Europe generally and in Southern Europe in particular. Stability in Kosovo has long been in the interest of the United States. If we could have been certain that the problems in particular parts of the former Yugoslavia would not spread, our response might have been different. But we are all too aware that trouble in the Balkans was the proximate cause of World War I. In 1992, the Bush Administration judged Kosovo so important as to justify warning of unilateral U.S. military action in response to Serb-instigated conflict with the Kosovo Albanian population.

Ten years ago, Kosovo was an autonomous province of Yugoslavia, with a functioning, multi-ethnic government. Milosevic took away that autonomy and implemented apartheid-like policies that excluded Kosovar Albanians from virtually all positions of authority. In 1998, this discrimination turned to systematic violence against the Kosovar Albanians, precipitating the crisis that forced NATO to act.

Diplomatic Efforts

As members of this Committee know, the United States, working with our allies and Russia, tried repeatedly to achieve a negotiated settlement in Kosovo. At every turn, Milosevic refused to accept a peaceful solution to the crisis he created. Early in the crisis, NATO signaled its resolve and concern by linking our diplomatic efforts with a decision by NATO in October 1998, to approve Activation Orders for air strikes in Kosovo. This helped secure an agreement on partial withdrawal of Serb forces and initiation of a diplomatic process to reach a political settlement. However, Milosevic failed to honor his commitments and started preparing a campaign to expel a large part of the Kosovar Albanian population.

Early this year, the US, our European NATO allies, and Russia all sought to avert a new crisis by another intense round of diplomacy, culminating in the multi-national conference at Rambouillet. Milosevic, however, refused to accept the settlement proposed at Rambouillet -- a settlement that had been reluctantly agreed to by the Kosovar Albanians. Instead, he started to execute a long-planned and carefully prepared assault on the Kosovar Albanian majority in the province.

NATO's Objectives

Milosevic doubted our resolve and has paid the price for doing so. Operation ALLIED FORCE began on March 24, 1999; it ended 78 days later on June 9. Before turning to some of the specific accomplishments – and lessons – of the campaign, let me make this fundamental point: NATO's operation, which all allies supported politically, and in which almost all allies with military forces participated actively, achieved its objectives.

From the beginning, NATO remained steadfast in its insistence on five critical goals. We sought:

- a cease-fire that would end the fighting;
- the withdrawal of Yugoslav military, paramilitary, and police forces from Kosovo;

- an agreement to deploy an international peacekeeping force in Kosovo with NATO at its core;
- the unconditional and safe return of refugees; and,
- an agreement to allow an autonomous government for Kosovo within Yugoslavia.

Effects of the NATO Air Campaign

As NATO intensified its bombing campaign and diplomatic initiatives, Milosevic realized that he had to capitulate or risk suffering irreparable damage to his regime, his military, and his power. That Milosevic accepted NATO's terms in full was the product of many factors – sustained allied solidarity; recognition that Russia, however much it disapproved of the NATO bombing, was not going to rescue Milosevic; frustration of his military's efforts to secure a fast and decisive defeat of the KLA; skilled diplomacy that brought Russia into the diplomatic effort; worldwide revulsion at Milosevic's ethnic cleansing; the increasing difficulties for Belgrade posed by its shaken public support; and escalating problems in sustaining military operations. But the key to all this was the unity of purpose demonstrated by NATO throughout the air campaign.

The NATO air operation seriously diminished Milosevic's military machine. When the operation began, Yugoslavia was a heavily armed country with an integrated, Soviet-designed air defense system, and a highly capable ground force conducting a ruthless campaign of ethnic cleansing and suppression of the Kosovar Albanian majority and the armed insurrection in Kosovo.

NATO's campaign negated that air defense, and severely impaired the ability of Milosevic's military machine to operate. At this point our estimates as to the details of the damage done are necessarily still based on preliminary assessments, but the broad picture is clear: NATO destroyed a great percentage of Yugoslavia's modern fighter aircraft and effectively negated the threat of its strategic surface-to-air missiles. NATO destroyed a significant share of the infrastructure that supports the Yugoslav military. For example, the campaign reduced its capacity to make

ammunition by two-thirds and eliminated all of its oil refining capacity and more than 40 percent of its military fuel supplies. While minimizing collateral damage, we brought the fight to the elite in Belgrade with successful attacks on Milosevic's command and control centers and his propaganda machine. The overall effect was to impair the ability of his security forces to operate and to generate sufficient concern about future damage to his regime, his country, and his personal position to induce him to accept NATO's terms.

As a result of the magnificent job that our pilots performed suppressing enemy air defenses, all but two aircraft returned safely out of a total of 37,225 strike and support sorties flown by NATO forces in carrying out Operation ALLIED FORCE. Of course, we sought to minimize casualties, but we were prepared for losses and American and allied pilots and aircrews risked death on every sortie. The threat was real. Hundreds of surface-to-air-missiles were launched at our pilots. In the end, we lost only two aircraft and no pilots. That is an unprecedented achievement in the history of air warfare, and reflects the talent and the training of our pilots, the power of our technology, the readiness of our forces and equipment, and the skill of all those who planned and supported the overall operation.

Lessons Learned

In the aftermath of our successful campaign in Kosovo, we need to take the time to assess our lessons learned. I strongly believe that we must have an integrated, analytical approach that accurately captures the details of the operation, within the larger context of joint and combined operations. To accomplish this objective, I have asked Deputy Secretary John. J. Hamre and General Joseph W. Ralston, the Vice-Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, to conduct a comprehensive after-action review, which they have already begun.

It is possible, however, to draw some general and preliminary lessons even before that review is complete. Above all, we saw demonstrated what we knew before -- the paramount importance of trained and dedicated people, of top-notch equipment, and careful planning. Maintaining and improving our record on this score will be the key to future success.

The operation also highlighted the importance of intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance -- and the fact that the assets that provide these essential elements of success are in short supply. It demonstrated the immense potential of precision attack munitions to make possible military operations with an effectiveness and accuracy undreamed of only a few years ago -- and made clear that we must assure that we have sufficient supplies of these munitions. Mobility assets, notably tankers and strategic lift aircraft were crucial -- both to move forces to the theater and to sustain operations. The operation highlighted the growing potential for information operations to contribute to military campaigns.

The operation also showed that war remains a dangerous and uncertain business. Technology and precision guidance have not eliminated the fog of war. The most careful planning cannot eliminate the possibility of errors based on incomplete information (as in the case of the accidental bombing of the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade) or malfunctions of munitions resulting in civilian casualties. We saw again the effect that weather can have on air operations particularly against fielded forces, and the concomitant importance of all-weather systems.

I do not draw from this campaign the lesson that air power is the total answer to military requirements. I continue to view air power as but one of several key elements necessary for the success of future military operations. Nonetheless, we cannot help but be impressed at the remarkable impact NATO achieved from the air. This is a tribute to the extraordinary dedication and skill of the men and women of our Armed Forces, as well as those of our allies. They are the ones who deserve the credit for this victory. Their efforts have been essential once again in restoring order to the troubled Balkans.

We also learned a great deal about NATO and its military and political operations. This was a NATO success, not that of any single member nation. NATO's clear sense of purpose, its unified approach, the willingness of virtually all allies to provide force contributions, and the steady application of air power were at the foundation of this achievement.

NATO's strengths included the ability to conduct sustained and effective combined air operations, and to do so on a multinational basis. By the end of the operation, US and allied planes were flying roughly equal numbers of strike sorties.

Most NATO countries with air forces sent planes to the fight with nearly one third of the committed aircraft coming from the allies.

The overwhelming success of this mission also highlights the great strides we have made in expanding operational coordination among our NATO allies. NATO's command structure worked well, allowing the Supreme Allied Commander to effectively employ all the assets that the NATO members contributed to the operation.

However, the operation did highlight that NATO would in the future have to give more attention to ensuring that our allies have the capability to operate effectively with U.S. forces. We still need to work to ensure secure aircraft communication between alliance members. Above all, we must take full advantage of the technological advances that can keep NATO's decisive edge. For instance, our actions in Kosovo clearly demonstrate the necessity of having precision-guided munitions as a major component of the NATO arsenal. The majority of precision-guided munitions are in U.S. stocks. NATO air forces do not, for the most part, have the ability to conduct sustained all-weather day and night operations.

We also need to assess NATO's aircraft requirements. While our allies were able to deploy 47 percent of the strike sorties for the mission, they provided only about 29 percent of the overall support sorties. All allies were able to get air contributions to the crisis quickly; however, the KFOR deployment was slower than desired.

Working to address these issues is the focus of NATO's Defense Capability Initiative (DCI). Through this initiative we hope to transform NATO defense capabilities to meet future security challenges. The DCI was approved at the NATO Summit here in Washington and is now being carried forward. An important element of the success of this initiative will be a willingness among the alliance members to apply the necessary resources to address these deficiencies. In other words, we need to see the commitment of resources to match the rhetoric.

We also need to consider what future NATO adversaries may have taken from this action. They should clearly see that NATO can deploy an overwhelming conventional military force. They should understand that NATO is able, not only to

respond to direct attacks on member nations, but to act to suppress conflicts that could adversely affect the security of NATO countries. Perhaps most important, they should see that NATO can take tough decisions and maintain its resolve.

Consolidating Success: The KFOR Effort

NATO's successful air campaign is now being consolidated on the ground by KFOR, the international peacekeeping force with NATO at its core. On June 12, 1999, KFOR forces began entering Kosovo to create a safe and secure environment to enable the return of refugees. The people of Kosovo demonstrated their confidence in KFOR with their feet. Almost immediately after KFOR entered Kosovo, tens of thousands of displaced Kosovar Albanians began returning to their homes. On June 20, I visited the Kosovo town of Urosevac, which is in the U.S. sector. I was greeted by jubilant refugees, many of them were returning to their community and walking the streets free from terror for the first time in months. I witnessed them welcoming the U.S. soldiers as the true heroes and liberators that they are.

KFOR is a military operation with a military mission. Its focus is on implementation of the military aspects of the agreements by both Belgrade and the KLA, and the promotion of a secure environment in the province. A separate international civil implementation force is being formed by the United Nations to provide for refugee assistance and resettlement, the rebuilding of public infrastructure, and the establishment of normal civil authority. We look forward to a time soon when a civilian government that is subject to democratic principles is functioning in Kosovo. KFOR will work toward this goal. These resources could also be used to rebuild the Former Yugoslavia; however, without significant democratic reform, Serbia will remain isolated and will not benefit from reconstruction.

While KFOR is operating in accordance with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244, it is not under United Nations command or control. It is instead under NATO command, with supreme political authority resting in the North Atlantic Council, composed of representatives of the 19 NATO members. The chain of command runs from General Wesley Clark, NATO's Supreme Allied Commander, to Lieutenant General Sir Mike Jackson, to individual national sector

commanders. General Clark has the authority he needs to protect his troops and carry out his mission, and does not require United Nations approval of his actions. He is carrying out a NATO mission and reports to the North Atlantic Council. He has sole command over all of the KFOR forces.

KFOR has entered into two important military agreements, which are essential to maintaining a secure environment. The Serbs have signed a Military Technical Agreement, clearly outlining the withdrawal of all Serb military, paramilitary, and police forces from Kosovo. For their part, the KLA has signed the Undertaking of Demilitarization and Transformation, an agreement to demilitarize and to turn in heavy weapons within 90 days. Thus far, the Serbs complied with their agreement and the KLA has begun to turn-in a portion of its weapons. KFOR will monitor compliance with these agreements very closely and is prepared to take appropriate action if either side is not operating in good faith. It is important to stress that we expect the Kosovar Albanians to refrain from reprisals and to abide by the commitments they have made regarding demilitarization. KFOR will remain evenhanded and balanced in its securing of the peace and maintaining good order.

It is natural at this point to ask how long our troops will be in Kosovo. We do not intend to make an indefinite commitment to maintain US forces in Kosovo. That being said, we will not tie our exit to a specific date or time. As is the case in Bosnia, NATO will undertake periodic reviews of the security situation and of progress towards the establishment of institutions that will permit Kosovo to function as a secure, autonomous, and self-governing entity within the FRY, pending a permanent political resolution of its status. As the situation permits, the size and character of the KFOR operation will be adjusted.

The forces that make up KFOR also deserve high praise for the outstanding professionalism they have demonstrated in carrying out their mission. The situation in Kosovo remains dangerous. It is likely to remain dangerous for some time to come by virtue of the tensions, the passions that are running very high. We have taken great care to develop operational procedures to minimize exposure to these risks; however, we cannot eliminate all the risks. The American people and the people of the other NATO nations that have sent troops to participate in KFOR must understand that the risk of casualties is real, just as it was in the air campaign. Indeed, we mourn the loss of our two Apache helicopter pilots, and of the soldiers

killed in the APC accident over the weekend. KFOR soldiers from the United Kingdom's Gurkha Regiment have also given their lives. The men and women serving in our Armed Forces know about risk. They accept it. We are grateful to them and it is their courage that will make the rebuilding of Kosovo possible.

Just as we did not act alone in the air campaign, we are not acting alone in Kosovo. Our European Allies have stepped forward to bear a substantial share of the burden in dealing with Kosovo. While the U.S. will contribute approximately 7,000 troops, the vast majority of KFOR forces will come from our allies. Britain, France, Germany, Italy, and the United States have taken responsibility for separate sectors within Kosovo. As local institutions take hold, NATO will be able to turn over increasing responsibility to them and draw down its forces.

Our European partners are committed to providing most of the resources for this effort, but it is in America's interest to do our part, as well. European security is too vital an interest for the United States to remain on the sidelines. United States involvement adds both credibility and conviction to the NATO mission in Kosovo, as it has in Bosnia. We must maintain the resolve of the Alliance if we are to achieve a long-term settlement to the crisis in Kosovo.

In addition to forces from NATO countries, KFOR will also contain troops from 14 countries in the Partnership for Peace program, including Russia, and troops from 5 other non-European nations. Russia played an important role in negotiating the peace, and we look for them to play an equally important role in the enforcement of that peace. Russian units will be operating in the U.S., German, and French sectors. All command arrangements preserve the principle of unity of command so vital to the success of a multinational operation. The Russian contingent in Kosovo will be under the political and military control of the Russian Command, but will be under the tactical control of the relevant sector commander, just as they have been in Bosnia. We expect to draw down these military forces as the situation stabilizes.

The overall direction for the operation of the Pristina airfield and control of Kosovo airspace will be provided by NATO's Director of Kosovo Air Operations. A Russian officer will serve as Chief of the Airfield at Pristina, responsible for duties such as airfield security, ramp management, and public works. The Chief of Air Movement at Pristina will be a representative of NATO, responsible for duties

such as approach control, tower services, and flight planning. A small number of Russian Federation Armed Forces will be stationed there to provide operational support, but again I must stress that these forces are under the control of the NATO sector commander. The number of Russian forces will be determined on the basis of NATO-accepted standards, but will not exceed 750 personnel for both the airport detachment and a logistics base in the town of Polje.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, responsibility for the disintegration of the former Yugoslavia and for this decade of barbarous atrocities rests largely with one man: Slobodan Milosevic. He came to power on a platform calculated to inflame ethnic hatred. Once in power, he took actions to transform ugly rhetoric into unspeakable acts that have devastated the region. Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia, and Kosovo have all suffered the bloody consequences. There are now numerous reports about the growing dissatisfaction with Milosevic. He has led Serbia on a disastrous course. The United States takes great interest in the future of Serbia, but Serbia has no future with Slobodan Milosevic.

We have accomplished much, but there is more work to be done. We will continue to play an active role in the Balkans. We do this not to be the world's policeman, but because stability in Europe is profoundly in our interest. I can report to you Mr. Chairman that our Armed Forces continue to stand ready to serve when our interests require. Congress has played an important role supporting these forces, the best-trained, best-equipped, and the most competent forces in the world. We welcome the support we have received for Operation ALLIED FORCE but also respect the voices of dissent. We look forward to working with the Committee as KFOR carries out its mission.