

THE OUTLOOK FOR THE INDEPENDENCE OF KOSOVA

HEARING BEFORE THE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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THE OUTLOOK FOR THE INDEPENDENCE OF KOSOVA

TUESDAY, APRIL 17, 2007

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS,
Washington, DC.

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:05 a.m. in room 2172, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Tom Lantos (chairman of the committee) presiding.

Chairman LANTOS. The committee will be in order.

It was some 20 years ago that I visited Kosova, and, as a huge crowd was gathering around the hotel where my wife and I met with Kosova leaders, at the edge of this vast group of people, policemen were beating up men, women and children for no reason whatsoever.

I have followed closely and intensely developments in this last region of the former Yugoslavia for years with numerous trips and with constant attention. And I am pleased beyond words that we have reached the point where the distinguished former President of Finland has come forward with a proposal which, reading Secretary Burns' testimony with great care, the administration supports, I support and I believe all rational people on both sides will support.

The Kosova assembly approved it by a vote of 100 to 1. And since it is a compromise, nobody is perfectly happy with it, but it is by far the best option open to us: Supervised independence, the end of the rainbow being the presence of NATO and the European Union, both of which entities I hope an independent Kosova at one point will join, full protection to the rights of the Serbian minority, decentralized local governmental decision-making, a grand compromise.

In the 1990s, the people of Kosova lived a nightmare that only NATO intervention could end. They have since awakened from the horror of ethnic cleansing. But today they are living in a state of suspended animation-free from the repression from the past, but haunted by the possibility of its return and uncertain about their future security in their own land.

For Kosova, there can be no freedom without independence. And for the international community, there is no acceptable solution other than independence. The issue here is not the ethnic solidarity of any other nation with any group in Kosova. The issue is fundamental justice and the best hope for peace, stability and prosperity in the Balkans.

This is the moment to put a war torn past behind us. For the Kosovars, it is the moment when centuries of imposed rule from far-away empires and nearby dictators must come to an end. The U.N. Security Council may soon consider resolution reflecting a blueprint for Kosova's future shaped with wisdom and patience by the former Finnish President, Martti Ahtisaari.

Clearly this is not a perfect solution. I would have preferred something different. But there is no better settlement in sight; there is no more time to wait. The strong support of the United States—its unwillingness to accept anything less than a vote for independence by other members of the Security Council—is absolutely critical. For Kosova there can be no freedom without independence.

The fate of Kosova represents a broad and fundamental issue: The realization of full self-determination in former satellite nations forced behind an iron curtain of artificial borders enforced by authoritarian rule.

Under the rule of Tito, Kosovars were accorded only semi-autonomous status. They were not recognized as a full republic with the Yugoslav federation, but were an acknowledged province within the Republic of Serbia. They were not accorded the limited sense of nationhood given to Bosnian Muslims and Croatian Catholics.

From the mid 1990s on, as the old Yugoslavia fractured under the pressure of new demands for freedom and national recognition, the United Nations and the international community recognized the independence of all the former Yugoslav republics that chose or won their sovereignty: Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia, Macedonia and, most recently, Montenegro. By population and any other set of criteria, Kosova was equally entitled to full independence and sovereignty. But it alone was excluded from the process of self-determination.

Those who are trapped in the past or yearn to repeat the bygone era of political divisions in Central Europe and the Balkans continue to suggest that, in effect, Kosova ought to be reintegrated into Serbia in both name and reality.

Serbia smashed any hope for this solution in 1999 when it carried out its vicious, systematic, brutal and premeditated ethnic cleansing directed against the Albanian majority in Kosova. No one who watched the news coverage in those days can forget the wrenching scenes of Albanian refugees desperately fleeing the marauding Serbian troops—old women, tiny children, men frantically trying to save their families.

The tide of history cannot be turned back. Serbia has lost all legitimacy to assert sovereignty over Kosova. It not only failed to protect the rights of the Albanians, who make up 90 percent of the population of Kosova; it also actively sought to drive out the Albanians.

NATO's bombing finally stopped the ethnic cleansing of Kosova and stemmed the massive flow of refugees being driven from their own homes and their own land. Since then, the United Nations has worked to keep the peace and rebuild the burned out homes and shattered lives of the Kosovars. The challenge has been to ease local tensions, to convince both sides to come to the table and to reach a lasting solution.

The United Nations and the European Union deserve our respect for their determination and their success thus far. We have seen 8 years of relative peace despite pressure from militant elements.

At no time during this past 8 years has the proposition that Kosova should remain part of Serbia been even a thinkable option under consideration by the international community. From the start, the U.N. stewardship was designed to serve as a transition to full independence. And everyone in the international community knew that.

Now is the time to end the remaining uncertainty. Only fully recognizing and implementing the independence of Kosova will permit the political and economic development that will lead to stability and prosperity. And only independence can help heal the wounds of a war-ravaged region.

Ethnic Albanians comprise some 90 percent of the population of Kosova, yet their international status remains in limbo. They again await the recognition from the international community that their neighbors have enjoyed for many years. For them, there is no freedom without independence.

If we mean what we say about self-determination and democracy, if we are truly ready to finish the job of liberation we started when NATO intervened in 1999, if we want to see the final defeat of Slobodan Milosevic's hateful project, and if we hope to avoid a relapse into ethnic tension and terror in this part of the world, the entire world must recognize Kosova as an independent nation.

I now invite my good friend and distinguished colleague from Arkansas, Mr. Boozman, to make his opening statement.

Mr. BOOZMAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Our committee ranking member, Ms. Ros-Lehtinen, has been detained due to air flight scheduling difficulties and has asked me to sit in until she arrives, which should be shortly after the hearing is begun.

I have the ranking member's opening statement. At this point I ask unanimous consent that it be inserted in the record.

Chairman LANTOS. Without objection.

[The information referred to follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE ILEANA ROS-LEHTINEN, A
REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF FLORIDA

I would like to thank the Chairman for holding this timely hearing on the status of Kosovo, and thank Under Secretary Burns for making himself available to the Committee. I look forward to your testimony.

In January, I joined Chairman Lantos in introducing H.Res. 36, endorsing the independence of Kosovo.

Last month, former Finnish President Ahtisaari presented his proposal on Kosovo's final status to the UN Security Council.

Because the basic positions of Serbia and the Kosovo government on final status are irreconcilable, there can be no perfect plan.

But the Ahtisaari proposal, which makes difficult demands of both sides, appears to be a step in the right direction.

It outlines an internationally-supervised transition to full independence, and a decentralized form of government that would allow a high degree of autonomy for Serb-majority municipalities.

I hope that today's discussion will help to clarify the details, limitations, and implications of the Ahtisaari plan.

In many ways, we are looking for the least painful way forward, to responsibly move beyond a zero-sum standoff on status, to the critical work of building a functioning economy and responsive political institutions, that will benefit all the people of Kosovo, regardless of ethnic background.

In today's imperfect circumstances, delay is not an option. Indeed, it is a danger. It is important to understand that the real choice we face is not between supervised independence and the status quo but, rather, between supervised independence and unsupervised, unilaterally-declared independence by Kosovo, with the potential threat of chaos and renewed violence in the region.

As underscored by public demonstrations in Pristina earlier this year, the legitimate expectations of the overwhelming Albanian majority cannot be suppressed indefinitely.

On the other hand, the legitimate fears of the Serbian minority inside Kosovo also must be addressed.

Any workable plan must provide for the credible protection of minority rights and opportunities, as well as the preservation of Serbian patrimonial sites within Kosovo, such as the historic Orthodox monasteries, whose roots stretch back most of a millennium.

Furthermore, Kosovo must be freed from the economic and political limbo that has contributed to its current malaise: 50% unemployment and 40% near-poverty rates would be a recipe for unrest even in the best of political circumstances.

It simply will not be possible to attract the foreign investment so desperately needed in Kosovo until its status is finally determined.

At the same time, the mere fact of independence will not magically fix those daunting economic challenges.

Finally, there is growing public dissatisfaction with the governing UN Mission in Kosovo, whose approval ratings have fallen to 24 percent.

For all these reasons, the consensus is that, although it will not be easy, the time for the independent self-government of Kosovo has arrived.

Before concluding my remarks, I want to express my admiration and gratitude for the efforts and sacrifices of our troops participating in the NATO-led Kosovo Force (KFOR).

KFOR has done a superb job in maintaining a safe and secure environment, and the professionalism and integrity of the U.S. contingent has earned the respect of both Albanian and Serbian community leaders within Kosovo.

Finally, let us appeal to the leaders of all communities within Kosovo for a commitment to peaceful cooperation in the months ahead.

The temptation to provocation and overreaction among radicals will only increase in the near future.

All parties must resolve now to resist those temptations, lest they derail the significant opportunities and benefits that all Kosovars stand to enjoy as participants integrated into greater Europe.

Mr. BOOZMAN. I am pleased to welcome Ambassador Nicholas Burns, the Under Secretary for Political Affairs at the Department of State.

As one of the members appointed by the Speaker to the NATO Parliamentary Assembly, I am particularly pleased to have Ambassador Burns here. He served as Ambassador to NATO prior to his current assignment and really did an outstanding job.

We are all aware of the critical role NATO played in the 1999 Kosova War and in the years since. Now, 8 years after that war, we are meeting today to discuss the prospect for the independence of Kosova.

Some of the concerns I hope we touch on this morning are the role the United States is to play in ensuring the stability in post NATO Kosova and how our relationship with Russia will change, if at all, should they oppose Kosova's independence.

What effect Kosova's self-determination will have in setting a precedent for other separatist regions seeking independence, and, perhaps most importantly, I would like to hear your thoughts on the viability of the plan set forth by former Finnish President Martti Ahtisaari.

Again, I thank our distinguished witness for sharing his time with us today. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LANTOS. I thank my friend from Arkansas.

I will be pleased to give an opportunity to all my colleagues to make a 1-minute opening statement.

Mr. Berman.

Mr. BERMAN. Nothing at this time.

Chairman LANTOS. Mr. Burton.

Mr. BURTON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Kosova has been a part of greater Serbia for a long, long time, and an exterior imposed solution I think could lead to real problems.

We have been trying to solve the problem of Israel and Palestine for a long, long time. An awful lot of people have been killed. An awful lot of people have been murdered. A lot of children have been lost.

A solution that is imposed from the outside, unless the parties both agree, is going to lead to a real military problem, in my opinion, down the road, so I think what we should be doing is urging the United Nations and our Government to work with both sides to try to come up with an equitable solution to this problem.

For us to sit here and say that Kosova should be independent, and I just want to say Milosevic was a bad guy. We all know that. Milosevic isn't in power right now, and the people in Serbia want to work this thing out so that everybody can live together in peace.

For the United Nations or the United States to come in and start telling them how to solve this problem in my opinion is the wrong approach. It hasn't worked in the past in other areas of the world, and I don't think it will work there without a lot of bloodshed and so my feeling is let us try to work to get them together to work out an equitable solution.

It may take some time, but for us to push and push and push and get this done where Kosova is independent without them working things out themselves I think is going to lead to a disaster.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LANTOS. Thank you, Mr. Burton.

Ms. Watson.

Ms. WATSON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I know the Under Secretary will probably stress how unique the situation regarding Serbia and Kosova is, but I would ask my colleagues to reflect on this for a moment and think about the reality of this statement, for there are dozens of such unique situations around the globe, yet I do not see the United States advocating the independence of Somaliland from Somalia, the independence of Taiwan from China, nor the independence of Kurdistan from Iraq or Turkey.

What gives me cause for concern is not how these situations are different, but how they are similar. In each you have a minority group fearful of domination by a larger, more powerful group, but in each case you have real dangers for the United States and suddenly and drastically upsetting the status quo.

There is broad international consensus that the status quo in Kosova will ultimately lead to upheaval if not resolved. What I do not understand is why our State Department would seek to remedy this situation by accelerating that upheaval.

I really cannot see the real difference between President Ahtisaari's plan and what beyond our word independence that we

now know. That one word in an instant makes Kosova's Albanian population winners and Kosova's Serbs losers.

If the goal of our strategy in the Balkans is to promote ethnic cooperation and reduce conflict, it seems like a singularly misguided strategy. Kosova's Albanians suffer greatly at the hands of the Milosevic dictatorship.

Chairman LANTOS. The gentlelady's time has expired.

Ms. WATSON. Okay. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LANTOS. Mr. Rohrabacher.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

First of all, I would like to express my appreciation for your leadership on this issue, but all the other issues dealing with human rights. Over the years we have worked together so closely, and I have appreciated the energy you put forward. Now as chairman, I certainly respect what you are doing here.

What better example than the one we have today. We are here to solve problems. We are here to try to get something done. We are not here to put off something over and over and over the years so that things fester.

This leader that we have here, Mr. Lantos, has decided that we are going to try to get this thing solved, and what I have heard so far from my good friend, Mr. Burton, let me just note that the United Nations and the United States and all the parties have worked together to try to come up with the very best possible solution that will be beneficial to both sides, both the Serbians and the Albanians. That is what we have in the Ahtisaari plan.

This has taken years in order to develop. I just came back from there last night, and I will tell you that this is the only hope that I have seen. I have been there on many, many visits. This is the only hope that I have seen in the many years and the many visits that I have been there, and this is the only plan that has stepped forward that actually will benefit in the long run to all of those concerned.

Let me just say that the reason why, and I know Ms. Watson pointed out examples in different parts of the world. The reason why we need to act and why this is different than those other places is the fact that we have 1,500 American troops there. It costs us \$250 million a year in order to maintain those troops and maintain our presence there at a time when we are stretched so thin that this is actually affecting our own national security.

I think the Ahtisaari plan is a good step for both the Serbian population for which rights will be protected, but also in lieu with America's interest and in keeping with our fundamental principles that people have a right to control their own destiny through the ballot box just as we started to do with our own country back in 1776.

There are other things that I would like to say, but I will wait for my question and answer period, Mr. Burns. Thanks for the good work you have been doing, Mr. Ambassador.

Chairman LANTOS. Thank you very much.

Mr. Smith of Washington.

Mr. SMITH OF WASHINGTON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just want to express my agreement with your comments. I think you as

chairman of this committee have shown outstanding leadership on this issue by leading in the right direction.

I agree with your comments, and I look forward to the testimony from the witness and the questions from the panel. Thank you.

Chairman LANTOS. Thank you.

Mr. Flake of Arizona.

Mr. FLAKE. No statement. I just look forward to the comments.

Chairman LANTOS. Mr. Crowley of New York.

Mr. CROWLEY. Mr. Chairman, although I didn't hear your comments I am sure I always agree with you, so therefore let me thank you for holding this hearing.

Ambassador Burns, good to see you again, my friend, and thank you for your testimony today.

I believe that people of Kosova have been waiting long enough, 8 years, for a decision to be made. I support Prime Minister Ahtisaari's proposal. I believe that sitting back and just waiting for the perfect solution to the problem, which will never materialize, is problematic not only for the people of Kosova, but also for the region, for the United States

I don't believe we should ever let the perfect be the enemy of the good, and I think that is what many here would prefer; that the perfect be in place. Nothing is perfect. There is absolutely nothing perfect about territory boundaries around the world. Somewhere somebody has a problem with some territorial boundary. I understand that.

These people have been through enough. It is time for investment, reinvestment into Kosova to get its economy going and letting it take its place amongst the nations of the world.

Thank you.

Chairman LANTOS. Thank you.

The gentleman from Nebraska, Mr. Fortenberry.

Mr. FORTENBERRY. No comments, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

Chairman LANTOS. The gentleman from New Jersey, Mr. Sires.

Mr. SIRES. Mr. Chairman, no comments. I am looking forward to the comments by the Ambassador. Thank you.

Chairman LANTOS. I thank my colleagues.

Despite his disturbingly youthful appearance, our most distinguished witness, Secretary Nicholas Burns, has served the United States with extraordinary distinction in a wide range of important diplomatic posts.

He did a superb job for our nation as our Ambassador to NATO, prior to that as our Ambassador to Greece. He served as spokesperson for the Department of State and has served in a variety of very important diplomatic posts across the world. We are indeed fortunate to have him representing the United States in so many important arenas of global conflict.

We are delighted to have you, Secretary Burns. Your entire statement will be included in the record, and you may proceed any way you choose.

**STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE R. NICHOLAS BURNS,
UNDER SECRETARY FOR POLITICAL AFFAIRS, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE**

Mr. BURNS. Mr. Chairman, thank you very much for this invitation. Mr. Boozman, distinguished members of the committee, thank you for the invitation to appear before you.

This is an important portion, as all of you have indicated, and I am here today to explain the position of the United States Government on the final status for Kosova, which we believe should be independence, and what our country should be doing to try to lend stability and peace to that very important part of southeast Europe.

Mr. Chairman, I would start with one historical reference. The last three American Presidents—President George H.W. Bush, President Bill Clinton and President George W. Bush—have all had one ambition, one vision for Europe since the breakup of communism in eastern Europe and the breakup of the Soviet Union, and that is, in the words of the first President Bush 41, “a continent that is whole, free and at peace.”

In my view, this has been the most important foreign policy objective that our country has had for the last 100 years. It is why we fought the first world war, the second world war, why we stationed millions of Americans in Europe during the Cold War, why we intervened in Bosnia and Kosova, as President Clinton did in the 1990s to bring about this realization.

It is within our grasp and that of the Europeans to achieve this great historical ambition, but there is one missing factor, and that is peace and stability and freedom that is missing in southeast Europe, particularly for the people of Kosova itself.

The United States over the last decade and a half through these three administrations on a bipartisan basis has played the key, the central role in trying to bring about an end to war, the wars of the Yugoslav succession, and a sustained peace.

In that respect, I certainly believe that President Clinton was right to intervene in Bosnia in 1995 and to achieve the peace that we subsequently did. He was right to intervene in Kosova in the spring of 1999, 8 years ago, to oppose Milosevic’s brutal attempted ethnic cleansing of over 1 million Kosovar Albanian Muslims.

President Bush has been right to maintain the American military presence as he did in Bosnia until 2 years ago and until this day, as Congressman Rohrabacher mentioned, until this day in Kosova itself where 1,700 of our citizens from 17 states’ National Guard units are serving with such distinction in Kosova itself.

So the United States has had a record and a commitment in the Balkans of involvement, in trying to ensure peace and in trying to bring freedom to the people there. It is our view that we have to now act resolutely in the coming weeks, and that is really all that we are talking about, before we finish this job to help lead the people of Kosova to independence.

This has been the cornerstone of our policy in this region. It has been to see these countries—Kosova eventually, Bosnia, Serbia certainly, Croatia, Macedonia and Albania—to become eventually members of NATO and eventually members of the European

Union, but before they can accomplish that they have to find their way toward full peace and toward full independence.

We don't believe that the region can move forward without resolving this last major issue relating to the breakup of Yugoslavia, and that is the status of Kosova. This committee asked me to appear before it in 2005, and then we spoke together about the need to deal with unfinished business in the Balkans.

Since that time, as you, Mr. Chairman, have noted, the former President of Finland, Martti Ahtisaari, has been asked by the United Nations Secretary General to undertake the mission to negotiate between Serbia and Kosova, as he has done, and to present his own plan for the future of Kosova to the United Nations Security Council.

He did so on April 3, just a couple of weeks ago, and they involve a detailed set of proposals for the future of Kosova, a recommendation that Kosova become independent subject to a period of international supervision, and under this plan Kosova will become independent but will continue a period of international tutelage for a number of years.

NATO, for example, will continue to police Kosova's borders and maintain internal peace until Kosova is ready to form its own armed forces. The European Union will lead the major international civilian effort to ensure that the settlement, the Ahtisaari plan, is fully implemented.

The United States supports President Ahtisaari's recommendation. In particular, we believe that supervised independence for Kosova is now the only way forward. After the violent breakup of Yugoslavia, which you, Mr. Chairman, referred to, after the attempted ethnic cleansing that Milosevic conducted in Kosova, any other outcome we believe would result is dysfunctional governance, strengthen the hand of extremists and lead possibly and directly to new conflicts.

The reality is that the ties between Serbia and Kosova were severed in 1999, and when the United Nations Security Council met on June 9, 1999, they passed Resolution 1244, and that resolution effectively removed Belgrade from control of Kosova itself, and it placed Kosova under a process of in effect trusteeship. Kosova for 8 years has lived under the rule not of Serbia, but of the United Nations.

Over 90 percent of the citizens are Kosovar Albanians. The great majority of the Serb population has left, and so now to try to reimpose Serb autonomy, reimpose Serb control over Kosova, would be highly unnatural and would defy the efforts that both Democratic and Republican American administrations have made over 8 years to try to stabilize the province.

The people of Kosova, in our judgment, will never accept Serb rule, and these people are manifestly pro-American. They were protected from slaughter and exile by the United States and by American troops. If you go to Kosova, as Congressman Rohrabacher has and many of you have, you see the great job that our troops have done with very little loss of life. It has been a peaceful environment, relatively speaking, over the last 8 years. People are beginning to learn to live together.

I have visited Serb families, the same Serb families in the town of Obilic, a very important town in Serb history, to make the point, and I bring the press with me, that we do expect the majority to protect the rights of the minority. We do expect the Kosovar Serb population to be protected once Kosova is independent, and we see that the Serb population will have a reason to stay.

Independence for Kosova will mark the definitive end of the tragic story of the breakup of Yugoslavia, and what it will do is it will allow the people of the region to focus forward as opposed to backwards because the incentive for Kosova and for Serbia will be to reform their economies to continue the process of democratic political reform so that they might become members of NATO and the EU in the future.

If we delay in making this decision, we believe the risks of violence will be greater, the risk of conflict will increase, and the people will continue to do, unfortunately, what the people of that region have done for so long, is to try to settle old scores, address old grievances and to look backwards, not forward, so our policy, Mr. Chairman, is to look forward, is to support the United Nations.

We have the full support of the 25 members of the European Union, and diplomatically I would expect that as we look ahead the United States will place a resolution to the Security Council for this process. It will effectively not create an independent state by itself.

We don't believe the United Nations has the right to create an independent state, but it will undo the resolution of 1999. It will retire the institutions of the United Nations that have seen Kosova through the last 8 years, and it will ask NATO and the EU now to play the leading roles in bringing Kosova forward to independence.

Once that resolution is passed we would think that the Kosovar leaders would declare their own independence, and then the United States and other countries would recognize that independence, so I wanted to be clear about that legal point.

We don't believe the U.N. has the right, and this maybe addresses one of Congresswoman Watson's questions, actually to create an independent state, but it creates the condition where people, as we did in the 18th century, can proclaim its own independence to be recognized by friends of that country.

Now, Congresswoman Watson, I listened to your comments with great care, of course, because of our respect for you, and I would just want to deal with the issue of precedence. Is this a dangerous precedent that we are setting here that might lead others to seek independence and to seek conflict—civil war—in achieving that independence in other parts of the world?

We do believe that Kosova is unique. We believe it is unique because of the way that Yugoslavia broke up, the way that Kosova was treated by Milosevic during the final years of Yugoslavia, by the fact that what happened to the Muslim population of Kosova in 1999 were unprecedented war crimes that Europe had not seen since the days of the Nazis, that the United Nations already decided 8 years ago to treat Kosova in a special way to in effect take it away from Serbia and take the trusteeship for Kosova into itself.

Now the representative of the Secretary General of the U.N. is effectively saying it is time. It is time. These people have practiced a degree of self-governance. They have met the human rights and rule of law standards that we established for them. They have worked hard to do so, and now the time has come to allow them to become independent.

So we assert that Kosova is different. It is different than Bosnia. It is different than Abkhazia. It is different than South Ossetia. It is certainly different from Somaliland or Puntland in Somalia, and we believe that achieving the independence of Kosova will not lead others to justify similar treatment from the United Nations or from the United States itself.

With those few words, Mr. Chairman, I don't want to bore the committee by slogging through a very long testimony, but I wanted to try to address some of the questions that were already asked, and I look forward very much to the give and take of the question and answer period.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Burns follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE R. NICHOLAS BURNS, UNDER SECRETARY
FOR POLITICAL AFFAIRS, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Chairman Lantos, Congresswoman Ros-Lehtinen and distinguished Members of the Committee, thank you for the invitation to appear before you to discuss the future of Kosovo, our strong support for its independence and our vision for progress and peace in Southeastern Europe.

The last three American Presidents—President Bush, President Clinton and President George H.W. Bush—have all had one vision for Europe since the fall of communism in 1989: a continent that is whole, free and at peace. This ambition has been the most important foreign policy objective for our country during the last one hundred years, as we fought two World Wars and the Cold War to bring about the day when Europe was finally free, peaceful and undivided.

This objective, however, cannot be realized fully and completely without peace and stability in the Balkans. While hundreds of millions of Europeans West and East have found freedom and peace, the people of Southeastern Europe have remained divided and in conflict. This is the last corner of Europe to find its full freedom.

Over the last decade and a half, the United States has repeatedly played the central role to end the wars of Yugoslav succession and to sustain the peace. President Clinton was right to intervene militarily in Bosnia in 1995 to end that terrible war. We were right to oppose Milosevic's attempted ethnic cleansing of over one million Kosovar Albanians in the late 1990s. America was right to keep our troops there alongside of our NATO allies in both places to maintain the peace. The U.S. has had a record of success in the Balkans that has helped people to escape tyranny and to find peace. We must now act quickly in the next weeks and months to finish the job by helping to lead Kosovo to independence.

The cornerstone of our policy in this region has long been the promise of integration of the Balkan countries with NATO and the European Union. This is surely the best way for the countries of Southeast Europe to rebuild their societies, see their economies grow and create new and peaceful relationships with their neighbors. Most of the countries that emerged from the disastrous and bloody disintegration of Yugoslavia are now on a path to membership in the EU and NATO. After years of conflict, our American vision is within reach.

But the region cannot move forward without resolving the last major issue related to Yugoslavia's breakup: the status of Kosovo. When I last appeared before this Committee to discuss Kosovo in 2005, I spoke about the need to deal with unfinished business in the Balkans and to accelerate the process to address Kosovo's status. Since that time, United Nations Special Envoy Martti Ahtisaari has led a thorough and comprehensive negotiating effort with the Kosovar leaders and the Serb government. On April 3, he presented to the UN Security Council his conclusions, including both a detailed set of proposals for Kosovo's future and a recommendation that Kosovo become independent, subject to a period of international supervision.

Under the Ahtisaari plan, Kosovo will become independent but will continue a period of international tutelage for a limited number of years. NATO, for example, will continue to police Kosovo's borders and maintain internal peace until Kosovo is ready to form its own army. The EU will lead an international civilian effort to ensure the settlement is fully implemented.

Independence for Kosovo

The United States fully supports President Ahtisaari's recommendations. In particular, we believe that supervised independence for Kosovo is now the only way forward.

After the violent break-up of Yugoslavia and the ethnic cleansing that Slobodan Milosevic conducted in Kosovo, any other outcome, we believe, would result in dysfunctional governance, strengthen the hand of extremists and lead directly to new conflicts. The reality is that ties between Serbia and Kosovo have already been severed since 1999 when the UN Security Council, in resolution 1244, decided to remove Belgrade's authority over Kosovo and place the region under UN administration. Now, over ninety percent of the citizens of Kosovo are Kosovar Albanians. They will never accept continued rule by Serbia. They are manifestly pro-American, having been protected from slaughter and exile by our troops. They will accept nothing less than independence. In the past eight years, Kosovo has strengthened its local governing institutions, including by electing an Assembly, a President, and Prime Minister. We see no credible option for integrating these institutions with Serbia.

Independence for Kosovo will mark the definitive end of the breakup of Yugoslavia, thereby allowing all the states in the region to focus on their future. It will enable Serbia, in particular, to move beyond the tragic and bitter legacy of the Milosevic era.

Kosovo's independence is a legitimate, fair and lawful outcome. While some have argued that independence would be a precedent for other separatist movements, we reject this notion completely. As with solutions to the other conflicts related to Yugoslavia's collapse, the Ahtisaari proposals are tailored to local circumstances and bear no relevance to other countries in Europe or other continents.

The special factors involved in Kosovo—in particular the non-consensual and violent breakup of Yugoslavia, Milosevic's policy of ethnic cleansing, NATO's decision to intervene, and the UN Security Council's decision that placed Kosovo under UN administration and envisioned a UN-facilitated political process to decide status—are found nowhere else and are unlikely to be duplicated. I would add that the UN Security Council, beginning with the extraordinary actions it took in 1999, has already been treating Kosovo as a special case for many years. Although separatists elsewhere may seek to link their cause with Kosovo, we know of no situation that is comparable and expect that all responsible governments will reject such comparisons.

Bringing about Independence

We are now engaged in a period of intense diplomacy to bring about Kosovo's independence as soon as possible, on the basis of the United Nations recommendations. Led by the President and Secretary Rice, we have begun a period of intensive consultations with our partners in the Contact Group, the UN Security Council and the leaders of Kosovo and Serbia.

We are working closely with NATO and the European Union, whose members agree with us that independence for Kosovo is the only viable outcome. The United States, NATO, and the EU have invested enormous political, economic and military resources in Kosovo and the region—we have the most significant equities at stake and therefore are most committed to seeing this process through.

The UN Security Council has already begun discussing President Ahtisaari's recommendations. In the coming weeks, the U.S. will sponsor a new Security Council resolution to replace resolution 1244, which established the current regime of international administration over Kosovo. This resolution will not actually confer independence on Kosovo. Rather, it will remove political and legal impediments to independence, as well as provide mandates for Kosovo's post-status international supervision under Chapter VII of the UN Charter. We expect that Kosovo's leaders will subsequently declare their independence. The U.S. and other countries will then recognize the new state. Our goal is to bring the Kosovo status process to a timely and successful conclusion by the end of this spring. We believe that the Security Council will recognize that President Ahtisaari's proposals represent the best chance to achieve a sustainable solution.

We have begun a series of discussions with the Russian government to encourage it to support this process, or at a minimum, not to block it. I met with Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Titov in New York two weeks ago to review the Ahtisaari plan

and will see him again in Europe next week. I made two principal arguments to Minister Titov. First, I pointed out that it has been the U.S. and Europe which have made, by far, the greatest commitment of troops, money and political involvement in Kosovo for eight years. It is our troops who will have to cope with the inevitable disturbances if independence is deferred by the Security Council. Therefore, the U.S. and Europe hope Russia will choose to work together cooperatively to maintain stability and peace in the region, which we believe will be realized best by a positive UN Security Council resolution. Second, any attempt to block Kosovo's independence will not succeed as Kosovo's independence is now, we believe, inevitable.

Need to Act Now

We cannot afford to wait any longer. Until there is clarity, Kosovo's undefined status will be a source of increasing tension and instability. Already, Kosovo's lack of status has blocked it from accessing badly-needed International Financial Institution lending and discouraged foreign investment. The prolonged period of UN administration has prevented Kosovo from assuming full ownership of its democratic institutions. Most seriously, Kosovo's people have been in state of limbo, not knowing for nearly a decade which country they would ultimately call home. Its ethnic communities have been denied a clear foundation on which to reconcile and build new relationships.

Our judgment is that further delays would worsen this situation, thereby strengthening the hand of extremists on all sides who would seek to exploit the rising frustrations of the people. In fact, we believe the risk of violence is far greater if we delay Kosovo's independence than if we decide it soon. Most experts believe that Southeastern Europe could descend into new war and ethnic conflict, threatening both the United Nations and NATO personnel deployed in Kosovo, if the dream of Kosovo's independence is deferred.

While the vast majority of countries that know Kosovo well support the road to independence, some, like Russia, have called for yet more rounds of negotiations between the parties. President Ahtisaari has concluded, however, based on his experience in the Vienna negotiations, that this is just not possible. He believes that a continuation of the talks, in whatever format and for however long a duration, would not bridge the fundamental gap in the parties' positions. We agree.

To continue this process indefinitely—to restart the talks, reopen Ahtisaari's recommendations or otherwise delay resolution of status—would make it harder, not easier, to find a sustainable outcome. We could see the unraveling of the many painful compromises made during the talks. We believe that those calling for such an extension are less interested in finding an acceptable common ground than in thwarting the desires of the majority of Kosovo's people.

We must not allow this to happen. After so many years of uncertainty, the people of Kosovo and the region have a right to know what their future will be. The credibility of the international community—particularly the United Nations, which has a legitimate and longstanding role to address situations like Kosovo—is at stake. We must act now.

Our Vision for Kosovo

Our vision for Kosovo is of a democratic, peaceful, multi-ethnic state on an irrevocable path to membership in NATO and the European Union.

Since 1999, Kosovo has made substantial progress recovering from war. Under UN tutelage, it now has a functional government, has conducted free and fair elections and operates a professional and multi-ethnic police force. The society has moved forward.

But we want to see greater progress in one key area: the protection of Kosovo's ethnic minorities. Kosovo's Serbs continue to face harassment and discrimination. This is unacceptable.

I have visited with minority communities and their representatives in Kosovo many times. In October 2005, I visited a group of Serb families in the town of Obilic, many of whom had been forced from their homes during the March 2004 unrest. One older couple had built their home in this historic town in the early 1960's. While their children had moved permanently to Serbia, they wish to stay in Obilic. They often feel threatened by their Kosovar Albanian neighbors. Surely, they must be given the right and opportunity to stay. Their stories of struggle and desire to live in peace made it evident to me that more must be done to protect these vulnerable populations.

Kosovo Prime Minister Agim Ceku and President Fatmir Sejdiu have sought admirably to reach out to all of Kosovo's ethnic groups and in the last six months they have achieved real progress on many of the most important priority Standards. Much more remains to be done. All of Kosovo's leaders have a heavy and urgent

responsibility to address these problems. They must do more to protect the rights, security and property of Kosovo's minorities, as well as rein in extremists and prevent social instability.

U.S. officials have conveyed these messages to Kosovar Albanian leaders at every opportunity.

I met with the Kosovar Albanian leadership just last week in New York at the Rockefeller Estate. I told them that independence would be a hollow victory if they are not able to build a more stable and democratic Kosovo. I believe they are committed to the goals of both independence and protection of minority rights. President Sejdiu and Prime Minister Ceku, in particular, understand that the U.S. and United Nations will accept nothing less.

The Ahtisaari Settlement

Fortunately, Kosovo already has a roadmap for building a better society: the recommendations of President Ahtisaari. During more than a year of negotiations, President Ahtisaari has sought compromises between the parties on many issues important to Kosovo's future, particularly the protection of Kosovo's Serbs.

President Ahtisaari brought the parties together to discuss decentralization of local government, constitutional protections for ethnic minorities, economic issues and the protection of cultural heritage. Secretary's Rice's Representative to the Kosovo Status Talks, the retired U.S. ambassador Frank Wisner, participated in many of these discussions and encouraged the parties to be flexible. Ambassador Wisner, an extremely distinguished and gifted diplomat, traveled to the region repeatedly to help bring the parties closer together on the issues. Calling upon his great experience in world affairs, he supported President Ahtisaari's work and played an important role in advancing the status process.

Although the Serbian side did not engage constructively in many of the discussions, President Ahtisaari was still able to identify significant overlap in the parties' positions. Based upon the proposals submitted by both sides and drawing upon his significant experience mediating other difficult international conflicts, President Ahtisaari has proposed a comprehensive set of governing arrangements for Kosovo. At the heart of his Settlement lies the need to make real, immediate improvements in the lives of Kosovo's minority communities. For example, he proposes mechanisms to ensure minority participation in institutions, enhance the rule of law, protect holy sites and give local communities greater say in their municipal governance.

President Ahtisaari's Settlement will provide a foundation for Serbs and Albanians to build new relationships based on trust and cooperation. His proposal for supervised independence constitutes a grand compromise between unqualified independence and return to an impossible status quo ante. As with any good compromise, neither side is completely happy with all these arrangements. I am pleased, however, that the Kosovo Assembly—by a vote of one hundred to one—has already committed to implement fully President Ahtisaari's Settlement. This vote was a sign of great maturity.

International Presence (ICO/ESDP/KFOR)

The United States recognizes, however, that an independent Kosovo will face enormous challenges. Its new institutions are weak, lacking the ability to fight corruption, organized crime and ethnically-motivated violence. Kosovo will need help implementing the arrangements President Ahtisaari has proposed.

Recognizing this situation, President Ahtisaari has recommended a period of strong supervision of Kosovo's independence by the international community. International civilian and military presences will remain in Kosovo for a short period to oversee implementation of the Settlement and provide for a safe and secure environment.

The United States will participate in the establishment of a new International Civilian Office in Kosovo, which President Ahtisaari has proposed to supervise implementation of the Settlement. This office will be led by a senior European official, with an American as his or her deputy. The head of the office will have executive powers to overturn laws, remove officials or take other action to ensure the Settlement is implemented. He or she will report to an International Steering Group composed of the current members of the Contact Group: France, Germany, Italy, United Kingdom, United States and Russia, as well as representatives of NATO and the EU. A joint U.S./EU advance team has been on the ground in Pristina for months coordinating the post-status transition with local and international officials.

A separate EU Security and Defense Policy Rule of Law Mission will be deployed to Kosovo to focus on the police and justice sectors. This mission will also have executive powers to carry out some of the most sensitive law enforcement functions, like war crimes investigations and the fight against organized crime. It will also focus

on building the capacity of the Kosovo Police Service and judiciary, so that these institutions may some day take over all responsibilities from the international community.

NATO, which has been the prime stabilizing factor in Kosovo and the region, will remain. The NATO-led Kosovo Force, which currently numbers approximately 16,000 troops—including about 1,600 U.S. National Guard soldiers—will continue to provide security. NATO will also supervise the establishment of a small, lightly-armed Kosovo Security Force. Development of the Kosovo Security Force will be important for hastening the day when Kosovo can provide its own security and NATO can draw down its forces from the region.

Economy

Kosovo's independence will not be sustainable unless we move quickly to spur economic development. The years of conflict and uncertainty have ruined the Kosovo economy. Unemployment in Kosovo is high, direct investment is minimal and Kosovo's infrastructure is poor.

To help Kosovo with its immediate development needs, the World Bank and the European Commission are planning a major Donors Conference. The Administration is prepared to make a sizeable contribution to this effort. The President's 2007 Supplemental Budget requested \$279 million for U.S. foreign assistance in Kosovo. \$151 million is requested in the President's 2008 Budget. Together, these budgets amount to approximately 22–25% of the anticipated international contribution.

A large percentage of this assistance will be dedicated to manage Kosovo's share of Serbia's debt. This is critical to ensure that Kosovo does not begin its life as an independent state with a crushing debt burden. We will also assist in projects to tap Kosovo's economic potential, particularly in the energy sector.

Serbia

As we move to the conclusion of the Kosovo status process, we must look comprehensively at the entire region, particularly to the future of Serbia. Serbia, a friend and ally of the United States in two world wars, is of immense regional importance. The Milosevic era of the last fifteen years was a tragic anomaly in our long history of warm relations. Now, however, the people of Serbia are charting a new course for their country, a path of integration and normal relations with their neighbors. After having rejected Milosevic's policies of nationalism and division, Serbia seeks to return back to the European mainstream.

Today's leaders in Serbia oppose the independence of Kosovo. Many of them feel they are being punished for the crimes of a previous regime. It is true that Serbia today is much different from the country of Milosevic. Although Serbia's current leaders did not perpetrate his crimes, they do have a historic and moral responsibility to deal with the legacy of its past. We are encouraging Belgrade to leave the baggage of the Milosevic era behind as it walks through the door to the Euro-Atlantic community. First, Serbia needs to meet its international obligation to cooperate fully with the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia. Cooperation with the ICTY—in particular, the apprehension of indicted war criminal Ratko Mladic—is of great importance to the normalization of Serbia's relation to the world.

But Serbia also has responsibilities with respect to Kosovo. We strongly encourage Serbia to support implementation of the Ahtisaari Settlement, in particular by encouraging Kosovo Serbs to take advantage of its broad and far-reaching provisions. President Ahtisaari went to great lengths to address Belgrade's legitimate interests in Kosovo. We also look to Serbia to establish normal political and economic relations with Kosovo, just as it has with the other successor states to the former Yugoslavia.

The United States believes that Serbia has a bright future, one that includes greater integration into the Euro-Atlantic community, rapidly escalating private investment, job growth, and more social and economic interaction with its neighbors. U.S. businessmen have a nose for detecting future trends—and, after only a few years of activity, now are the second largest group of foreign investors in Serbia, with over \$1.3 billion invested in a wide variety of activities, from manufacturing to media to banking.

The United States will encourage our partners in both the EU and NATO to do more to recognize Serbia's potential and accelerate its Euro-Atlantic integration. For example, last fall, at the NATO Riga Summit, we supported Serbia's entry into the Partnership for Peace program. We already have substantial assistance programs underway in Serbia, and we are considering doing more, consistent with current legislative restrictions. The next few months will be difficult but we and our European friends will continue to help the Serbian leadership stay on track, keep focused on

a brighter future and bring their society closer to the Euro-Atlantic family of democracies.

Conclusion

This is the American vision for Southeastern Europe. This vision, however, cannot be realized until both Kosovo and Serbia move beyond the conflicts of the past and set themselves on an irrevocable path to the European Union and NATO. Therefore, we must act now to solve the last major issue related to Yugoslavia's bloody collapse.

Mr. Chairman, members of the Committee, with the resolution of Kosovo's status, the region of Southeastern Europe is poised to enter a new chapter, one that provides a better future for its people. The United States, which has played the central role in bringing peace to this region, is absolutely committed to bringing about Kosovo's independence. With your support, I believe we are capable of achieving a historic, bipartisan success for U.S. foreign policy.

Chairman LANTOS. Thank you very much, Mr. Secretary.

Speaking of your testimony, let me say I read your testimony with great care, and I agree with it in its entirety. There isn't a sentence in your testimony that I would not subscribe to.

Before I raise some issues, I would like to turn to the distinguished chairman of the Europe Subcommittee who came during our opening statements for his opening statement. Mr. Wexler.

Mr. WEXLER. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. That is very kind of you. I listened, as did everyone, very carefully to Mr. Burns, and I also subscribe to everything that he said.

It is rare that a diplomat comes before the committee and speaks I think as forthrightly as you have spoken this morning. It was a very strong statement. I congratulate you for it.

In effect, if I understand what you are saying we are in the final stretch, that the United States supports the independence of Kosova for all of the historic reasons and practical reasons that you pointed out today, and we are also fully committed to bringing Serbia into NATO and into the European Union as soon as possible under the right circumstances.

I think both are extremely important, and I agree with Congressman Engel and with many others who for years have fought, along with the chairman, Mr. Lantos, for the independence of Kosova. I support their efforts and join with their efforts and support Mr. Ahtisaari's plan.

My question to Mr. Burns at the appropriate time, Mr. Chairman, would be the one wrinkle in this plan appears still to be the recalcitrance of Russia, and I would be curious if we could hear what the administration, what Mr. Burns, has to say in that regard.

Chairman LANTOS. Thank you very much.

Let me just raise a few items, Mr. Secretary. The first one, just a reminder to the predominantly Muslim-led governments in this world that here is yet another example that the United States leads the way for the creation of a predominantly Muslim country in the very heart of Europe.

This should be noted by both responsible leaders of Islamic governments such as Indonesia and also for jihadists of all color and hue. The United States' principles are universal, and in this instance the United States stands foursquare for the creation of an overwhelmingly Muslim country in the very heart of Europe.

Now, it seems to me, and I would be grateful if you would comment on my observations, Mr. Secretary, that the prime beneficiary

of the Ahtisaari plan is in fact Serbia relieved of the burden of an entity which for obvious historic reasons no longer wishes to be ruled from Belgrade.

When the Ahtisaari plan is fully implemented, Serbia will start its path toward membership in the European Union, full membership in NATO, the rebuilding of its economy and taking its proper place as a respected European nation in the family of European nations.

So I think it is very important as we consider this most important issue, we don't focus exclusively on the Kosovars of the region, but we recognize that by cooperating with the Ahtisaari plan, Serbia will in fact be the prime beneficiary of this proposal.

My friend, Mr. Wexler, already raised the issue of Russia, so let me just echo my concern with respect to the anticipated obstructionist tactics that I think are perfectly conceivable on the part of a Kremlin, which clearly has not hesitated to suppress domestic expression of free speech as we saw in Moscow and St. Petersburg just a few days ago and has continued to pursue singularly negative policies in the Middle East and elsewhere, so I will be grateful for your comments on Russia.

Finally, although you mentioned this I want to strongly underscore the commitment of the Congress to the long term and full protection of the Serbian minority in an independent Kosova. This does not just relate to historic religious sites. This relates to the right of every single individual living in the new independent Kosova to full civil rights and full protection in every aspect of their existence.

We are not supporting an independent Kosova just to see that outrage is perpetrated against individuals of Serbian descent, so I want to underscore I think on my own behalf and I think on behalf of every member of this committee, that we are passionately committed to the civil and human rights of all Serbians who choose to remain within this newly independent country.

The good fortune of Kosova, of course, is that within the European framework there is a rainbow at the end of this road, and the rainbow is full membership in the European Union and in NATO. I wish we had a similar rainbow for all our problems in the Middle East. Our efforts to bring about a peaceful resolution would be much easier.

In Europe we have that wonderful future that so many countries have taken advantage of and hopefully many more will, so if I might ask you to comment on these issues. I would be grateful.

Mr. BURNS. Mr. Chairman, thank you. I would like to start where you left off and agree with you that it ought to be a bipartisan issue. I know it is. That all of us need to raise our voice to protect the Serb minority and the other minorities, the Roma and others in Kosova itself.

The Ahtisaari plan speaks to this directly. In fact, I think it is the best and major part of what he has done. You are right to say that the most important thing is that we protect people first, buildings second. We have to do both.

I refer to the fact that I have been twice to Obilic to see the Stolic and Petrovic and Yacvic families, three Kosovar Serb families, one of which moved there in the early 1960s. This is home to

them. They want to stay in Kosova after Kosova becomes independent. They don't want to leave.

The test for the majority, and I think this does speak to the very good concerns that Congresswoman Watson raised, is the majority must protect the rights of this minority, and that means the people have a right to live and to prosper and to see their future there, to see their kids stay and their grandchildren stay.

We also have to protect the patrimonial sites, the historical sites and the churches of Kosova. This is a very important place in Serb history for the people, the Kosovar Serbs.

In March 2004, on two successive nights there were mobs that went into the streets and attacked Serbs. They killed Serbs. They burned some Serb houses. They burned some Serb churches. It was a shameful moment, frankly, for NATO—I was Ambassador at the time—because about half of the NATO troops from the various national contingents went into the streets, followed the orders of the commander to put down the rioters. About half stayed in their barracks and didn't.

It was a crisis for NATO because we let down the Serbs of Kosova, and we vowed, General Jim Jones leading us, that we would never let that happen again. I am proud to say the American troops did go into the streets, did do their job, and I am absolutely confident that NATO has now corrected 3 years later that major deficiency and that NATO has a major responsibility to keep the peace and to protect the Serb minority, but the special responsibility rests with the leaders of Kosova.

I had a chance, Mr. Chairman, last weekend to go up to the Rockefeller Estate north of New York and to join the Kosovar leaders who were meeting there to talk to members of our administration. They spoke to President Clinton, former Secretary Albright, and we all gathered with them for 3 days to help them look at their first 120 days in office. How can they govern?

All of us from President Clinton on down to myself and others stressed this aspect that you have stressed. You have got to send the right signals; not just that you will tolerate minorities living with you, but you will embrace them and work toward the creation of a multiethnic community in Kosova. I wanted to lend my voice to yours in support.

Mr. Chairman, the Ahtisaari plan we think is a very good one. This is a very skillful and wise person who, as you know, in Namibia in the past, in Ashay, has been a key international statesman in going into the most difficult ethnic conflicts and trying to help resolve them.

He has spent 18 months on the job. If you read the hundreds of pages that he has produced in this plan, it does provide for protection for the Serbs, and I think you are right to suggest that one of the principal beneficiaries of this whole effort will be Serbia itself because once Kosova is free and independent Serbia is going to be freed from, frankly, this tortured past that Milosevic led it into in the 1980s and 1990s.

Serbia will be able to focus on the fact that we have already brought Serbia into partnership for peace with NATO. It will be able to look down the road as, frankly, the keystone state in the Balkans, the most important state, the biggest state, the most pow-

erful, and say that their future is with democracy. It is with the EU and with NATO. That is our ambition.

I spoke to President Tadic, a very fine man, Prime Minister Kostunica, another fine person, a legal scholar. I spoke to them both on the day 3 weeks ago that we announced our support for Kosova's independence, and I told them that I knew we would have a major disagreement with them on this issue, but that it was our strong hope—President Bush's hope, Secretary Rice's—that once this process was over and once Kosova became independent the United States and Serbia would return to being good friends and that we would act to try to bring them into these European institutions.

I would just like to say I am very pleased that we are joined today by the Serb Ambassador, Ivan Vujacic, and also by the Belgian Ambassador, Dominique Struye de Swielande. They are both important because the Serb Government will now need to reflect on what the Security Council is about to do. Belgium is a member of the Security Council and will lead all of the U.N. Ambassadors next week, including Ambassador Khalilzad, who was just sworn in by Secretary Rice last evening. President Bush and Secretary Rice met with NATO and the EU. They will go to Belgrade to see Prime Minister Kostunica and President Tadic, and they will go to Pristina to meet with the Kosovar Albanian leadership. That will be next week.

When they return then I think we will begin the debate on the resolution that will prepare the way for independence, so this is a very complex undertaking, but you are right to suggest that Serbia will be liberated by this process.

Finally on Russia, we have pledged to work with Russia during this very difficult process, and we believe that what we are proposing is the right thing for southeast Europe and for the people of the region, and we hope to convince the Russian Government that it should join what I think will be a very large consensus among the countries of the Security Council that we ought to take this step.

I met with Deputy Foreign Minister Titov in New York, the Russian deputy foreign minister, 3 weeks ago. I am meeting him again next week. Secretary Rice will be speaking and then meeting with Minister Lavrov in Oslo, Norway. We are reaching out to the Russian Government to suggest to them that the history of this process is going to be very important, and let us do it in a constructive way.

That is the spirit with which we enter this process, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LANTOS. Thank you very much.

Mr. Boozman.

Mr. BOOZMAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. With your permission, I would like to defer my questioning and go ahead and yield to Mr. Rohrabacher.

Chairman LANTOS. Mr. Rohrabacher.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Thank you very much. I can't express more deeply my appreciation for you, Mr. Chairman, and for the hard work that Ambassador Burns and others have made. I certainly

would like to totally identify myself with your remarks and the remarks of the Ambassador.

Having just returned from that area, I can just confirm everything you have said. It is time to get on, and this is not an anti Serbian initiative. It is one that will be so beneficial to the Serbian people both who live in Kosova, as well as the Serbians who are part of the Serbian community there.

I talked to President Tadic. I expressed that to him. I met with many Serbian leaders. It is a crossroads, and we are trying to push these people in the right direction knowing that there are political considerations going on in their own countries. Serbians have had to realize that a decision has to be made, and either the Albanian Kosovars are going to be independent and be able to have their own country or they are going to have to be made part of Serbia.

What is in the long-term interest of the Serbians? I will tell you it is not that one-third of their country is made up of Albanians who don't want to be part of their country. That is not in the interest of Serbia clearly, and especially with the birth rate, which would mean if the Kosovars become part of Serbia maybe within 20 years Serbia would have a majority Albanian population. That is obviously not in the interests of the people of that country to go in that direction.

At the same time, the Ahtisaari plan bends over backwards, does everything possible, to make sure that the Serbian minority is being protected, even to the degree that the boundary lines of certain communities within Kosova or Kosova, depending how you pronounce it, the boundary lines of certain communities are being retransfigured so that the Serbian minority will feel safe and secure within this new independent Kosova.

Now, that has actually received some opposition among the Albanian Kosovars, but we know that both sides have got to give a little bit to make each side feel that this is a win/win plan that Mr. Ahtisaari has come forward with. I think it is win/win for the short term and the long term.

Let me just note, this is based on principle. We believe the people have a right. We Americans believe the people have a right to control their own destiny. I don't distance myself so much from every other group in the world as I know that you must in order to make sure that we have stability in the world. I am somewhat sympathetic to other people who are seeking their independence.

We also believe in individual rights and human rights. These are principles. If we do expect the Albanian Kosovars to accept the decentralization which is mandated by the Ahtisaari plan, I just remind you, Ambassador Burns, that we need to make sure that when the rights of Albanian minorities are being stepped upon, just as we are trying to protect the Serbian minorities in Kosova, that we will stand up for them.

There are 14 Albanian Montenegrans, for example, who are in prison right now. Three of them are American citizens. I would expect that this administration would make that an issue in order to prove to the Albanian Kosovars that we are standing up for the rights of their Serbian minority, but we will stand up for their rights when they are a minority.

When you talk about the United States of America, our allegiance are to specific principles—the principles of self-determination, that we have a right to control our destiny through the ballot box, coupled with of course our recognition of individual rights that are granted by God to every person on this planet.

I think that the Ahtisaari plan that we have before us today reflects those principles and reflects not only the principles that we are talking about, but a practicality that will actually make the world better, both the Serbians and the Montenegrans and the Kosovars and the Albanians. All of these people will be made better by this agreement, and it will be a more peaceful world, which is what we are seeking.

I appreciate your leadership. I would like to just mention about Russia. Russia has of recent days with Mr. Putin has come under serious attack for some of his policies that are less than acceptable to those of us who put an emphasis on human rights. I don't think there is anything that President Putin could do that would greater demonstrate that he wants to be a responsible world leader than to work with us now in this solution, in the Ahtisaari solution.

Yes, there have been some demonstrators that have been broken up in Moscow and got a lot of attention. Well, that can be discussed, but if he wants to get beyond that and show that no, these people were not justified in their criticism of his regime let him play a responsible role in bringing peace to this part of Europe. It will go a long way toward gaining the respect that Russia deserves in this world.

I just thought I would express that to you. Again, thank you for your hard work. You have done a great job, and the Ahtisaari plan is a great plan.

Chairman LANTOS. Mr. Berman.

Mr. BERMAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I join most of my colleagues in very much agreeing with the sentiments you and Ambassador Burns have expressed.

I also think the way you have done this—the reference to the Security Council, the commission of the Ahtisaari group—creates a multilateral and international basis to justify this that gives it much more force than a simple unilateral declaration without this effort would have made, and I think that was a wise decision by the administration.

I would like to focus a little more on timing and Russia. You indicate you expect then in the next couple of weeks, 3 weeks or so, to be tabling a resolution essentially implementing the Ahtisaari recommendations that would lead to the independence of Kosova. Am I right? Do I understand that correctly?

Mr. BURNS. Yes. Following the trip of the Security Council Ambassadors next week on the 23rd and 24th of April to the region they will come back, and then the United States would intend to submit a resolution with a number of co-sponsors that again would not seek to create in the resolution independence, but would undo 1244, the resolution from June 1999, and set up a Chapter 7 mandate for NATO and for the EU to provide the transitional support and the framework for a new independent state. That state would then proclaim itself.

Mr. BERMAN. So in effect the U.N. would be authorizing a NATO Chapter 7 force to in effect remain in Kosova with a time limit? How would that be?

Mr. BURNS. Forgive a little bit of theology for my part, but it is important. We members of NATO believe that NATO, while it always welcomes the support of the United Nations, does not require the prior authorization of the United Nations to deploy.

You remember, that was a big issue when President Clinton—

Mr. BERMAN. Sure. You wouldn't have been in Kosova in the beginning.

Mr. BURNS. Exactly. So NATO will go in with the support of the United Nations through Chapter 7, and the EU will then lead an international civilian mission that will take the place of the U.N. mission that has effectively run Kosova for the past 8 years.

Mr. BERMAN. Now, give us a little more. You have indicated how you want to deal with Russia on this issue, but give us a little more analysis of what you think motivates Russia.

In the late 1990s, Russia was not helpful. One thought that they viewed their relationship with Serbia both in ethnic and geopolitical terms in some fashion as an ally. I have heard from Russians and Russia experts that that relationship isn't so crucial to Russia anymore.

It is more a question of laying out the principles involved and who gets to self-determination in order to create a dynamic that could support some of their interests say, for instance, vis-a-vis Georgia in the future? Could you speak to that?

Mr. BURNS. This is obviously going to be a very complicated and difficult process how we deal with the Russian Government through this.

We have made a decision some months ago that we wanted to reach out to the Russians early on to try to bring them into this process and to see if they can exercise a constructive stance and so that led to my meeting with the Russian deputy foreign minister that I described. We will continue that in the next few weeks.

We hope Russia is going to do the right thing here because I sense just over the last several days as we have been calling capitals to try to enlist their support for this resolution, I sense that we already have enough votes to win by a majority in the Security Council and so we would hope that no permanent member would exercise the right of veto and would therefore allow this to go forward.

One of the things I think we have to remember is that Russia has had a longstanding historical relationship with Serbia going back centuries. Russia and Serbia feel close to each other, but I would suggest that the United States has also had a very good relationship with Serbia.

Serbia was an ally during the Second World War. The Serb partisans fought Hitler in a very effective way in the Balkans. We have consistently supported this slow transition to democracy that has been accelerating over the last few years since Milosevic's downfall.

One of the points we continue to make to the Russians and others is who has done the work over the last 8 years? Whose troops have been in Kosova? Whose money has gone to support the prov-

ince? Whose political efforts have been most prominent? It has been the United States and the European Union.

We are the countries that no matter what the Security Council does will have to be there to help shoulder the responsibility for the aftermath. We want that aftermath to be positive and one of independence and peace rather than one of stalemate, which would be produced by a hung jury.

Mr. BERMAN. And just my final point if you could comment on?

Assuming your diplomacy is successful, Russia does not veto this resolution, they abstain or vote and then they come up with policies respecting or giving greater credence to the notion of an independent Abkhazia or South Ossetia, what will we say in response?

Mr. BURNS. Congressman, we would never accept that argument. It has no grounds. Abkhazia and Ossetia are part of a sovereign state, a friend of the United States, Georgia.

The other separatist movements throughout the world have been referred to here. We would never accept the argument that somehow this establishment of an independent state in Kosova is a precedent that would encourage others or should encourage others to secede.

I think there has been a great amount of debate inside Russia about this because of course Russia is a country with many different nationalities and sometimes separatist tendencies. We have always supported since December 1991 the territorial integrity of Russia. We shall continue to do so.

It is really a double-edged sword, this eschew of a precedent, and I think that has been recognized by a lot of very sophisticated Russian Government officials, as well as observers.

Mr. BERMAN. Thank you very much.

Chairman LANTOS. Thank you.

Mr. Burton of Indiana.

Mr. BURTON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I continue to be very concerned about a solution imposed from the outside solving this problem. We have seen other parts of the world where we have tried to impose a solution from the outside, from the U.N. or from the United States and others, and it has been very, very difficult, and the carnage continues.

As I understand it, there is about 250,000 Serbs in Kosova, and I have been told by Serb leaders that if this happens they will be forced in all probability into mass migration north of the Ibar River, and that will cause a real human amount of suffering.

What I can't understand, and I know this has been going on for a while. Why this rush to judgment? It seems to me that there have been a lot of places in the world where there have been an awful lot of problems that have gone on for a long, long time, in particular in the Middle East. It has been going on for hundreds of years and especially since 1948.

Why is it we can't try to get these leaders together on both sides and sit them down and work through this thing over a period of time and get them to work out a solution?

One of the things that I have heard about, which probably won't fly, is that everything north of the Ibar River, give that to Serbia as one possible solution. Now, I don't know if that is good or not, but it seems to me that negotiation might be the best way to make

sure there is peace over there. If we impose this and we pass it through the Security Council as you suggested and all hell breaks loose over there, what are we going to do then?

You know, you said the Albanian Government has given assurances that they can and will fulfill their obligations and they will fulfill all democratic standards once they are independent when it clearly is not capable of doing it right now. What is going to make them capable of doing that then if they can't do it now?

Mr. BURNS. Thank you, Congressman. I would just try to answer your question in the following way.

The interventions of the United States military in Bosnia in 1995 and Kosova in 1999 were remarkably peaceful, and subsequently we have lost very few soldiers in violent incidents. In fact, I think in Bosnia none, in Kosova just a few, mainly traffic accidents. Remarkably peaceful.

You are right to suggest—I mean, you are absolutely right to suggest—there are high emotions here, but the Serbs and the Albanians have largely acquitted themselves in a civil way toward each other under remarkably difficult circumstances.

I met with students in October 2005 from Mitrovica. This is the battleground town. This is the town that is divided between Albanians and Serbs. Those students said to me we want to live in peace, and when independence comes—the Serbs said it—we may not like it, but we choose peace.

Now, I can't predict—no one here can predict—what is going to happen on the streets. I can't predict the number of refugees. I imagine there will be some, but if we continue to assert and if the Serb Government does, if the Albanian leadership does, that this should be carried out peacefully there is at least a chance that that can happen, and we should encourage that.

We have tried to talk this out. For 8 years we have tried to bring Serbs and Albanians to the table together. When I visit—when I am sure Members of Congress do—I get together with Serbs and Albanians and try to work with them at the table.

That is what Ahtisaari has done for 18 months, and in reality what happened at the end? Prime Minister Kostunica and President Tadic made the decision they were not going to be at the table. They went to a few meetings. They kept the Kosovar Serb leaders from attending most of the meetings, and they essentially made the political decision we are separate from this process. We don't want to participate.

Mr. BURTON. Pardon me for interrupting, but let me just compare this to the Middle East.

How many years have we been trying to get a solution between Israel and the Palestinians? How many years have we been trying to get them to sit down and talk about these things? We have been doing it for a long, long, long time. Eighteen months is not a long, long time.

It just seems to me that if you are going to have a long-term peaceful solution, both sides are going to have to sit down and agree to something, and an exteriorly imposed solution I am afraid is going to lead to a conflict.

You may disagree. We will just have to wait and see because I think you and the United States State Department and the admin-

istration are committed to this approach. If that is what happens, I just hope you are right. I am very concerned about it.

Chairman LANTOS. Thank you very much.

Mr. Wexler.

Mr. WEXLER. I want to again reiterate my support for Ambassador Burns' statements.

Mr. Burton raises I think some very interesting and important points that I don't take exception to, but just as a conversational retort. I think it is important to point out though, and this was not Mr. Burton's point and I am not suggesting that it was, but in the context of the Middle East Prime Minister Barak went and negotiated and offered with President Clinton a whole big slice of what Israel controlled, including portions of Jerusalem, and agreed to negotiate, and that obviously is history and didn't come about.

Ambassador Burns rightfully points out what I think is historic fact in terms of what occurred with the Serbian Government. I think the underlying point here is, one, President Tadic is the positive future of Serbia, and he was not able apparently politically, intellectually, whatever the reason, to make a decision to engage diplomatically at that point.

Given that reality, the United States and our European allies and the United Nations has reached the conclusion that this is the most prudent, practical way in which to achieve the just result for Kosovo and at the same time hopefully allow the pragmatic, reform minded, democratically committed leadership in Serbia to make the appropriate arguments to the Serbian people that an EU and NATO future is what is in their best interest.

The real question is not so much I don't think President Tadic, because I have complete confidence that President Tadic is a very pragmatic and responsible leader. The question is will a significant consensus of the Serbian people respond to the international effort now with a positive response and saying now we have to be committed to an EU and NATO future and do the things that are required in order to do it.

That is the real question. I don't think there is a question mark about President Tadic.

Mr. BURTON. Would the gentleman yield?

Mr. WEXLER. Of course.

Mr. BURTON. This relates to what he is saying. There is a political climate that we are involved in over there right now. Tadic is in a political situation.

That is one of the reasons why I have asked that this thing be looked at over a longer period of time before we rush to judgment because once this election is over, Tadic—I have met with you. You have met with him. I think he is a reasonable guy, and I think they will try to work it out, and I think he will be back to the conference table with the Kosovars.

To do this in advance of that, and I thank the gentleman for yielding, I think could be a problem.

Mr. WEXLER. If I could get the time back? To a certain degree that history is already written. I mean, Mr. Ahtisaari has prepared the plan. I think what Ambassador Burns says, which is so crucial, is that the time is now. That decision is made, and I support it.

I know others on this committee have worked for a long period of time to make it happen, Mr. Engel and the chairman in particular, and I just want to reiterate the chairman's earlier comments that I think an overwhelming number of us on this committee support your efforts in their entirety.

I also think the comments that the chairman made initially are worth repeating, and that is this is but one example where the United States both militarily, diplomatically and economically, has stood on principle largely for the benefit for a majority Muslim population.

Even in the context of Europe, it has been the United States who has been steadfastly in support of Turkey's membership in the European Union. While America is not a perfect country and we make mistakes and we deserve criticism at times, I think also this is one of those times in which our Muslim allies across the world ought to take their hat off and say it is the United States who twice militarily went in not because of religion, but because of principle, but the beneficiaries of our military might were largely Muslim populations.

As Ambassador Burns rightfully points out, there is great respect and great applause in Kosova for the American efforts. This is not a situation where our efforts have been ignored by the local population, and I think that is a very important point when we talk about independence.

These are people, and Mr. Engel has pointed this out on many, many occasions. These are people who are overwhelmingly supportive of the United States.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LANTOS. Thank you very much.

Before yielding, if I may just make an observation because I enjoyed the dialogue between my two good friends. One of the difficulties we all face in dealing with this part of the world is that the ethnic mosaic in this region is of staggering complexity, and people's prime identification is with their own ethnicity.

So coming at the problem from the United States where our principal identification is not one of ethnicity, but one of commitment to the principles and values of an open and free and democratic society, makes our approach extremely difficult.

This is a region where even after many generations the prime commitment to many members of all groups is to their own ethnic background, which makes sitting down around the table and discussing things without the participation of some intermediary—in this case a very distinguished internationally respected diplomat like President Ahtisaari—is really the most likely avenue to bring a constructive result.

The gentleman from Arizona, Mr. Flake.

Mr. FLAKE. I thank the chairman and thank you for the testimony and appreciate what we have heard so far.

I have a lot of confidence in Martti Ahtisaari. I had the privilege of being in Namibia for a year the year that U.N. Resolution 435 was implemented with Mr. Ahtisaari as the U.N. special representative, and I know of his capabilities and his expertise, and I have no doubt that he has put together a good plan.

With regard to that plan, do you see, and I know it is not very diplomatic to point at possible shortcomings, but the time periods within the plan, the other elements. Do you see any weaknesses there that need to be addressed still?

Mr. BURNS. Thank you, Congressman. As the chairman pointed out in his opening statement, this is inevitably a compromise. When a figure of such stature spends 18 months trying to be the referee between two important groups, what has evolved is a compromise so it is not perfect. It is not perfect in every respect, but it is the best available option.

I think to address your question and also very good questions from Congressman Burton, in my judgment I guess I would say this. If we thought that by staying at the table—Ahtisaari, the United States, Serbia, Kosova, others—we would produce a better solution we would stay at the table.

We are not trying to rush to judgment here, but it has been 8 years, and I think there does come a time. You rightfully point out it has been 59 years since the creation of the state of Israel; therefore, the effort to try to bring peace there.

If after 8 years we think there is now a prospect to resolve this we should go for it, and I think that is the judgment that we have made for the Ahtisaari plan. It is a remarkable plan, and if you read all of the appendices it does provide in elaborate detail. It addresses the concerns that the Serbs raised.

I think the tragedy of these talks over 18 months, and I was involved from the beginning in supporting Ahtisaari, is this: He essentially could not convince Belgrade to allow the Kosovar Serb leaders, who many of us have met in Kosova, to come to the table. They were isolated. They wanted to join the negotiations, and Belgrade said no.

In addition, apart from a few perfunctory meetings the Serbs did not really put themselves into these talks. They said they rejected Ahtisaari. They called for a new negotiator. They said the United Nations doesn't have the right to take action.

We just fundamentally disagree with the Serb Government. A friendly government, but disagree on all those points.

Mr. FLAKE. With regard to that 18 months, ever since the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 it has been a fait accompli that Belgrade's authority over Kosova was gone.

Was there anything that the Serbian Government could have done short of allowing independence that would have kept them at the table or would have made further negotiations fruitful at all, or is it just an unwillingness on their part to accept that outcome that seems to have already been predetermined?

Is there anything that they could have said or done that would have kept the negotiations going?

Mr. BURNS. Well, I think you do have to go back to the end of 1998 and the beginning of 1999 and just the unprecedented brutality of what the Serb army tried to do to the Muslim population. That was the fundamental demarcation point that led the United Nations to decide 8 years ago we are going to effectively take this province away from Serbia.

When Prime Minister Kostunica said to me on the phone 3 weeks ago, he said Mr. Burns, the real answer is autonomy, I said with

respect, Prime Minister, you lost Serbia 8 years ago. It was taken away 8 years ago.

Now, I think you have asked a very good question. Could they have negotiated in a different way and would that have prolonged the effort? I think if the Serb Government had shown a real interest in negotiations it would have changed the dynamics, but Ahtisaari was there for 18 months, had very little buy in.

We have had a marvelous negotiator, Frank Wisner, a former retired American Ambassador, a very distinguished person. He has been at this for well over a year, and he has had the same frustration in trying to get the Serbs to believe in the process. They have fundamentally rejected this process.

Mr. FLAKE. Thank you.

Mr. BURNS. Thank you, Congressman.

Chairman LANTOS. Before recognizing my next colleague, I have the extraordinary privilege to introduce some visiting members of the European Parliament.

Twenty-six years ago I was asked to chair the United States delegation to the European Parliament, and I have watched with delight and joy to see the growing importance of this extremely important legislative body covering much of Europe. The European Parliament has evolved from a relatively weak institution into an increasingly important, constructive, positive and powerful entity.

If I might ask the distinguished members of the European Parliament to stand? We would like to recognize you. [Applause.]

We are delighted to have you and congratulate you on your outstanding work.

Ambassador Watson of California.

Ms. WATSON. I also, Mr. Chairman, welcome the European Parliament. I was just counting. They have half women and half men. That is progressive as I see it.

Secretary Burns, listening very closely, I think your arguments are well taken. However, again I see the United States acting ahead of the people who share the ethnicity, share the region, et cetera.

I was recently over the last 10 days in China, and one of the things we steered away from with great caution was ever mentioning Taiwan. We went from Beijing down to Hong Kong. You have to have a passport to cross over the line. They talk about one country, two systems.

I am trying to look at this situation and look at the impact on Russia and the fact that we are suggesting independence, and it just seems like we are getting into the middle of an age old conflict.

So my question to you, and there are several issues, but if we immediately move and support independence, what will that say to Russia? Would it look like we are moving out ahead of the very careful compromises that have been made thus far?

I am really concerned, and I want to commend the Chair because this is an airing of a resolution and not a markup on it so we have time, but I think it is worth taking the time to see if there can be some reconciliation among the parties involved internally rather than the powerful United States trying to push something prematurely.

Can you respond, please?

Mr. BURNS. I would be happy to. I think it is obviously a logical thing to assert.

Let me just say first of all the United States is not acting alone here. Our participation in the Balkans has been with Europe, as I think the members of the European Parliament will attest.

What we did in Bosnia to stop the war and keep the peace for 10 years was a United States and European joint venture. What we have done in Kosova is a United States and European joint venture.

What will happen after independence will be that the EU will take the lead on the civil side of implementing the Ahtisaari plan and NATO will take the lead on the military side, so we are in this with the Europeans. We could not do it without them.

I have praised before the role of Belgium, which will lead the Security Council delegation, all of us, into the region next week. Germany and France and Britain and Italy and Spain and Greece, all the countries have made major contributions.

If we felt that there was a real prospect of negotiations, of reconciliation at the table, we would support it. There would be no reason not to. But the Serb Government has made a political decision not to participate, and they have been very clear about that. They have asked for Ahtisaari to be fired, and they have said that they won't participate with him.

I don't think there is a realistic prospect that a continuation or a delay in Kosova's final status will lead to a better situation. In fact, we looked at this very carefully with our European friends, and we said are we better off supporting a solution in the spring of 2007 or delaying a year or 2?

We became convinced in looking at it, all of us, that the prospects for violence would be greater if we waited because 92–94 percent of the people who now live in Kosova are Albanian Muslims. They have been waiting a long, long time, and the prospects for civil unrest are much greater if we delay than if we act. That was a fundamental part of our decision making process.

On the Russians, we have reached out to them.

Ms. WATSON. Excuse me. Just to hear you clearly, when you said when we delay are you talking about the United States or the European Union or our coordinated effort?

Mr. BURNS. Our coordinated effort, and I meant specifically—I should have been more specific—the United Nations.

The United Nations now has to act. It has to take a decision that we will undo the decisions we made in 1999 when the war ended to establish this trusteeship of sorts, and we will now move on to this new phase and so we, the international community, must act.

I want to assure you, we haven't made a move without conferring with our European allies. There is a contact group—Germany, France, Italy, United Kingdom, the United States and Russia. I will be going next Wednesday to meet with all those countries with my counterparts, including the Russians, to try to make sure that we are working in lock step.

My final word would be to answer your question to me on Russia. We are trying to convince the Russian Government to work with us. The Europeans are and the United States is. We hope that the

Russians will in the final analysis decide that this is a prospect worthy of their support.

I don't know if they will make that decision, but we have not given up hope.

Chairman LANTOS. Thank you very much.

Ms. WATSON. Well, I—

Chairman LANTOS. I am sorry. The gentlelady's time has expired. The gentleman from New Jersey, Mr. Smith.

Mr. SMITH OF NEW JERSEY. Thank you. I yield 15 seconds to Mr. Burton.

Mr. BURTON. Yes. I just have one statement I would like you to respond to.

Kosova serves, according to Serbs who are here today, as part of the delegation, and also they participated by proposing over 200 amendments which Ahtisaari dismissed during this 18-month negotiation.

After you answer his questions, if you would respond to that I would appreciate it. Thank you.

Mr. SMITH OF NEW JERSEY. It is good to see you again, Mr. Secretary. Thank you for your very faithful and tremendous service to our country.

A couple questions. I know you have already answered this, but I have ongoing concerns, as do many other members, that the ethnic Serbs, the Serbs that could be put at risk, are adequately cared for.

We know for a fact that even with the international presence there has been an enormous amount of damage done to monasteries and churches that have been targeted: Perhaps you might want to respond to that if you haven't already.

Secondly, the Helsinki Commission, which I chaired or co-chaired for 12 years, followed Kosova, as you know—you had testified before our Commission in the past—and focused attention in recent years on the need not only to relocate displaced Roma living in unhealthy lead-contaminated camps in northern Kosova, but also to have the original neighborhoods rebuilt.

We shared and communicated with you on this, and the department said that you share our concerns. We did learn a few weeks ago that some Roma families have moved back to their neighborhood. Could you elaborate on this and indicate whether this positive development might encourage returns to Kosova generally and what can be done to ensure that the Roma are not victimized again by any new Serb-Albanian clashes?

Finally, how important, from a United States point of view, is the OSCE mission in a postwar status Kosova to you and to the department? It seems to me that the ability to monitor the situation with field offices throughout Kosova, as well as the democracy building expertise that the OSCE brings, should make it quite useful.

I have trouble with the fact that the OSCE monies in the proposed budget are cut and that that could hamper our ability to do our part in ensuring that there is a fully staffed mission in Kosova with OSCE personnel.

Mr. BURNS. Thank you very much, Congressman.

To very briefly answer Congressman Burton's question, it is true that the Kosovar Serbs participated in some meetings, but for the most part they were prevented over 18 months for the most part of responding in a meaningful way to the Ahtisaari negotiations.

I have that directly from President Ahtisaari, and we have had enumerable conversations with Kosovar Serb leaders who have told our people in Pristine how frustrated they were that Belgrade effectively kept them out, so I would say at best sporadic, but essentially noninvolvement.

There were lots of suggestions made by the Serb Government and the Kosovar Serbs at the end of the process, many of which were accepted, and if you read the appendices, particularly getting to Congressman Smith's question of protection for churches, patrimonial sites, et cetera, there are extensive provisions incorporating some of the ideas made by the Kosovar Serb leaders.

There are nine specific sites, for instance, that NATO will have to protect. There are other sites that will have local police protection because we have had experience, unfortunately, as I said before, with people choosing to burn down Serb churches and patrimonial sites, and we are absolutely committed to protect them, Congressman Smith, as well as Congressman Burton.

Congressman Smith, I would say that the Roma are very important, and I know that you have been a long-time leader in following the tragedies of this community. We believe that approximately 200 members of the Roma community have returned to their original neighborhoods in South Mitrovica, which is a positive story.

The United States has provided over \$1 million toward the effort to resettle and to help rebuild some of these communities, and I think just in March, if I am not mistaken, 36 homes and two apartment buildings were rebuilt in Kosova for the members of the community.

I can't say it enough, and I think the reason why so many of you are concentrating on it is it is the heart of the matter. The majority leadership, the Albanian Muslims, are going to have to step up and assure everyone and the United Nations that they will commit themselves to minority rights.

When I met with them, when President Clinton did the other day in New York, they signed a statement, the entire leadership team, saying that they would do so. We all told them that we would hold them to that standard, and I think that is fair for Members of Congress to suggest the same thing to them and would be very helpful if you would remind them of those responsibilities.

Chairman LANTOS. Thank you very much.

Mr. Engel of New York.

Mr. ENGEL. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I have been identified with this issue from the moment I came to Congress more than 18 years ago. I have been to Kosova many, many times. I am well known there. I know everyone in the government there and in the opposition, many of whom are very good friends of mine.

I want to commend Ambassador Burns for the fine work that he has done through the years not only in this region, but all throughout. I just cannot put in words enough effusive praises of Ambassador Burns.

I joked with him that I was going to feel a little responsible for his speech since he and I flew back from New York last Thursday evening on the plane, and he was writing his speech and changing his speech and doing all kinds of things. I wanted to peek over his shoulder and get a preview. I didn't get it, but I knew that every word he said would be right.

Ambassador, I agree with every word you said. I wouldn't change a thing. I support the Ahtisaari plan. I support it wholeheartedly. I think it is our best hope for peace and stability in the region.

In a plan nobody gets 100 percent of what they want. There are things that I would have liked to see in the Ahtisaari plan that are not there, but given the circumstances on the ground, given the realities of the situation, this is by far and away the most positive news we have had coming out of the region in terms of a plan for peace and stability and a future of the region.

I want to in a bipartisan fashion commend President Bush and the administration, President Clinton as well. Both Presidents understand that this issue needed and needs to be resolved, and President Bush has been steadfast in saying that this really needs to be done now.

You know, it is clear that independence is the only solution. I have been saying this for years. Kosova cannot continue to have an international presence, although an international presence will remain under the Ahtisaari plan, and I think that is good. I think the Kosovars understand that and know that.

Ambassador, we both attended and participated in that conference last week in Westchester, New York, right outside of my district, the Rockefeller Conference, where we had everyone from the Government of Kosova there, opposition people, the President, the prime minister, the head of the parliament, the leader of the opposition. They all agree on one thing. They may disagree on tactics, but they all agree that independence is really the only solution.

When I hear them speak, I am really just impressed, amazed and really proud of the way they conduct themselves. They understand, and I have said this for many years and they agree, that the Serb minority has to be protected and that all minorities in Kosova have to be protected and that all citizens of Kosova need to participate in a multiethnic Kosova.

We want to make sure that everyone is safeguarded and that Serb holy places are safeguarded and ethnic Serbs and Roma and everyone else is safeguarded. The leaders of Kosova understand that and they say it. It is not being pulled out of their mouths or kicking and screaming. They know that this is what they have to do.

I couldn't agree with you more, Mr. Burns, that the possibility of violence if we delay is something that increases as we delay. People there have been waiting for years and now really is the time.

Mr. Wexler, and I want to compliment him, made many good points, one of which is that the Kosovars are pro-American, so pro-American it isn't funny. They will be a strong ally of the United States and of NATO and of the European Union. That is very, very

important. I believe that we need to have a presence there. We need to make sure that things go right.

I just want to ask my good friend, Mr. Burns, if there is anything he would like to add. You don't have to because I think everything you have said is just perfect, but again I think it is so important that we understand that independence is the only solution and that it is important for the United States to remain engaged.

Mr. BURNS. Thank you, Congressman. I just wanted to commend you for your long, long time leadership in this struggle. We appreciate that very much.

I think you are right. Prime Minister Ceku and President Sejdiu are very impressive people. I had dinner with them last Thursday night. I have met them of course in Pristina. They are people worthy to lead a new country. It is going to be an extraordinarily difficult undertaking, but we think they and their unity team are up to the task.

I also agree with you. It is remarkable how pro-American these people are. There is a street named after President Clinton. There is a street named after Congressman Engel. I told President Sejdiu I hope there will be a street named after President Bush because this has been a bipartisan effort, Democrats and Republicans.

Mr. Chairman, with permission, I was remiss in not addressing Congressman Smith's last question. I agree with the congressman. Along with the European Union and NATO, the OSCE is going to have a critical mission post independence.

Frankly, forgive me. I wasn't aware there had been a decrease in the budget. I will look into that and get back to you personally on that.

Chairman LANTOS. I am pleased to note the naming of the streets after distinguished Americans. I am looking forward to an equestrian statue being erected in your honor, Mr. Secretary.

Mr. ENGEL. Mr. Chairman, it is nice to have things named after you while you are still alive to see it. That is all I can say.

Chairman LANTOS. I would like to yield to the gentleman from California, Mr. Costa.

Mr. COSTA. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, again for a well thought out hearing.

Ambassador Burns, you talked in your opening statement about a number of the complications or challenges that we now face. One of the problems that has been discussed is the plan's extensive and multifaceted provisions on minority rights.

I am wondering as it relates to the Kosova Serbian community if in fact there is a rejection to accept the plan or abstains from engaging within the government at Pristina or at the local levels what that will portend toward trying to reach the sort of consensus we would like to see?

Mr. BURNS. Thank you, Congressman. I think what is noteworthy, one of the noteworthy aspects of the Ahtisaari plan, is it does provide for substantial autonomy within Kosova itself, and that reflects the multiethnic makeup of the province.

So, for instance, there are in the north of Kosova majority Serb communities, and those communities would be encouraged to have a great deal of autonomy from the central government in Pristina, which would reflect the fact that local self-rule in many ways might

be the best way forward to preserve the internal integrity of the country itself.

As you suggest, there are substantial provisions for the protection of the rights of not just the Kosovar Serbs, but the Roma and the other minorities. We have for 8 years suggested that there are standards that had to be met before status could be achieved. That was the mantra. Standards before status.

We made the decision in the autumn of 2005, 18 months ago, based upon the recommendation of a very wise Norwegian diplomatic, Kai Eide, when he went to the region and came back and said the time has come to get on with achieving now the final status, and sufficient progress had been made on the standards to allow that.

I think you are right to imply and to suggest that as we go forward we cannot forget about these standards, the rule of law, democratization.

Mr. COSTA. Protection of minority rights.

Mr. BURNS. Protection of minority rights. Exactly. These are all going to be important, and we are committed to them.

Mr. COSTA. Another element in this challenge, of course, is Russia's role. It is my understanding that the U.N. Ambassador from Russia made a proposal on a fact-finding mission.

Given their involvement and the history, I think many of us are wondering frankly whether or not this is a stalling tactic, whether it is a serious proposal, and how in your opinion, Mr. Ambassador, you feel it fits with the recommendations that you have made to us in your testimony this morning.

Mr. BURNS. Thank you. I met with Ambassador Cherkin, Vitaly Cherkin, the Russian Ambassador, a few weeks ago. He did suggest two things. He said the members of the Council, the 15 current members, the Ambassadors, should take a trip to see for themselves the situation on the ground and, second, that there should be some report on how the U.N. had done over the last 8 years.

We decided to accept both recommendations because while the United States and Germany and France have been fundamentally engaged in Kosova for 8 years, many of the nonpermanent members—South Africa, Indonesia, Qatar, Panama, Peru, Congo-Brazzaville, for instance—have not and so we felt it would be to the advantage of those countries to be able to meet the Serb leadership in Belgrade, the Albanian and Serb leadership in Pristina, and also to meet Javier Solana and Jaap de Hoop Scheffer the leaders of the EU and NATO respectively in Brussels because of the row of both those institutions. That will happen next week.

Mr. COSTA. So you think the proposal was helpful?

Mr. BURNS. We think it is a good proposal. We thought it was helpful, but we also think that after that trip we should then proceed and have a good debate on this issue at the U.N.

Mr. COSTA. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I reserve the balance of my time.

Chairman LANTOS. Thank you.

The gentlelady from Texas, Sheila Jackson Lee.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Chairman, let me thank you, first of all, for your indulgence and recognition of me for comments and indi-

cate to the Ambassador the very potent diplomat and a big thank you for your service.

Let me also thank Ranking Member Ileana Ros-Lehtinen and express my enthusiasm for Congressman Wexler and Congressman Engel for their leadership.

I will take a moment of personal privilege to recount some history why I believe this is a time of celebration and pose two distinct questions. I went into the three former Yugoslavia-Croatia-Bosnia before the Dayton Peace Treaty was signed as probably one of the first semidiplomatic codels

We went in at the direction of President Clinton to come back to convey to our colleagues why the Dayton Peace Treaty at that time was relevant. Milosevic was still in power. The three Presidents we spoke to. Of course, Milosevic had a silver tongue about how he was going to cooperate, and that certainly I guess laid the groundwork for not believing all that you hear.

I subsequently tragically had to see the devastation of Kosova and went into the Albanian camps and then met with then General Wesley Clark, who was proceeding in that particular action and I think a very stellar moment for the Clinton administration. It was not popular certainly. There was a lot of difficulty in the Congress about what should be done, but I think that was the right thing to do to stop the horrific bloodshed and ethnic cleansing that was going on.

Many people thought there would never be a good end, but one of the striking elements I believe militarily, of course, was the question that we stood alongside of NATO, and that was very, very instructive and very, very important.

I support the envoy's and the United Nations' recommendation of independence, as I see your testimony suggests, and I think we should do it enthusiastically and embrace it, but also stand ready to be tutors as needed and as called upon by Kosova and the people of Kosova.

I want to follow the line of questioning. We have Russia standing alongside possibly being difficult, possibly diplomatically they might be rethinking their position, and though you may have answered this I would appreciate maybe what diplomacy should be pursued to get Russia's I would like to say enthusiastic participation and support?

I also want to know the role of NATO, the continuing role of NATO, because Kosova getting on its feet or looking to be integrated into the EU and other systems obviously will need that support.

I might say, Ambassador, that I will add an additional note of personal reflection. The way in Kosova had many different spin masters and opinion makers. I think it was the right thing because we did it collaboratively and cooperatively.

I hope that this can be a symbol that regions can be reconstructed, that regions can be rebuilt, that people can have dignity, and my personal note is that that should be reflected, of course, in the conflict that we are waging many miles away, and I think the difficulty we find in Iraq is that this pathway and this road map was not followed.

I don't ask you to comment on that, but I use this as a very shining example having not the firsthand experience of others, but certainly being on the ground and seeing it and living it and viewing the crisis as horrible, but applauding the success.

Can you then answer the question of the Russian involvement and then the ability of Kosova to elect and to be able to have an independent election and a safe election for independence?

Thank you again for your service.

Mr. BURNS. Congresswoman, thank you. I just share very much your belief that we were right to go in before Dayton in Bosnia and also in Kosova. They were very unpopular decisions at the time. I remember the public opinion polls.

I think President Clinton was right to do it. President Bush has been right to keep the faith and to keep American troops there. It has been a remarkable victory for our country. It has been bipartisan. I am a nonpartisan person, so I can suggest that.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. I understand.

Mr. BURNS. I think we should all be proud.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. And it has been collaborative, I understand, as well with the European allies.

Mr. BURNS. Very collaborative. We could not have done anything without Europe. Europe has been the indispensable partner to us for a decade.

On your first question, I have answered it a number of times, but maybe I could try to shorten my answer and be succinct. We should talk to the Russians, which we are doing. We should encourage the Russians to do the right thing and to allow Kosova to become independent, and we should remind the Russians that we have done the heavy lifting—our troops, our money, our involvement with Europe—and that no matter what happens the day after, no matter what the vote is, we will be there.

I think that we have a lot of credibility in suggesting to the Russians and some of the other countries that we have paid this price and it has been the right decision to have such intensive American involvement.

I agree with you on NATO, Congresswoman, and thank you for raising it. NATO has been indispensable, and if you look back on the 60 years of our alliance—we will celebrate the 60th anniversary 2 years from now—our finest moment was stopping two wars, bringing about two peace agreements and freeing the Muslim populations of southeast Europe from potential annihilation in two wars. It is a very proud accomplishment of NATO.

Finally, Congresswoman, you are right to look ahead. A constitution will need to be written for Kosova. Elections will need to be held. Laws will need to be passed to create a civil society. Taxes paid, as Oliver Wendell Holmes said.

There is a lot of work to be done, and we believe this team, and there were both Muslims and Serbs together last week in New York where Congressman Engel and I were together, saying that they want to take on that job. We think we should support them.

Chairman LANTOS. Thank you very much.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Thank you.

Chairman LANTOS. Before recognizing the distinguished ranking member, I am delighted to welcome my good friend and distin-

guished colleague from Illinois, not a member of the committee, but you are most welcome to participate with us, Ms. Bean from Illinois.

Ms. BEAN. Thank you very much, Chairman Lantos.

Chairman LANTOS. Your microphone?

Ms. BEAN. Is that better?

Chairman LANTOS. No. Maybe you can move to the neighboring chair.

Ms. BEAN. Is that better?

Chairman LANTOS. Yes.

Ms. BEAN. Thank you, Chairman Lantos and Ranking Member Ros-Lehtinen, for letting me join you today in your committee on this important hearing.

I have a number of questions for Secretary Burns. What I may do is run through them, because they do relate to one another, and then you can respond.

The first one is I don't understand why. You are saying it has taken a long time, but it does seem to be a rush toward a so-called solution of independence. I don't understand what independence solves.

You talked about abandoning the premise of standards before status, and if a provisional government has been unable or unwilling to move forward on achieving those standards that would protect the ethnic Serbs in their own country, I don't know why they would feel safer in an independent Kosovo.

There is a bit of a logical inconsistency with suggesting that somehow if ethnic Albanians are not safe in a greater Serbia then somehow ethnic Serbs should feel safe in a greater Kosovo. Maybe you can explain that inconsistency. It is unclear to me.

You talked about compromise in that the Serbs were unwilling to compromise, and I guess I would ask what compromise President Ahtisaari was even willing to consider, given that there has pretty much been an attitude of a foregone conclusion that independence is what it is about and if the Serbs want to talk about that that they can talk about that, but what other options were even raised or considered?

Precedent is the third question. How are you not concerned about the precedent of severing a historically significant portion of a sovereign nation because of an ethnic majority? How is that not relevant to ethnic majorities that exist in other countries, and how are we as an international community and as a country going to respond to when other communities choose to sever themselves from their countries toward independence?

My next question is how does this move us forward? We talk about I think our nation has been a beacon of hope for democracies around the world where diversity works, and instead of making diversity work in this country or helping in assisting as an international community we are saying it can't work, so let us just separate. I am also concerned about that precedent.

I will let you respond. There are a lot of questions in there, but I am very anxious to hear what you have to say.

Mr. BURNS. Congresswoman, thank you very much for your interest, and I would be happy to have a separate discussion with

you if you are interested to go over all these in some detail, but I will say this. I want to do honor to your questions.

I will try to do my best to conflate them perhaps and to say that we are not rushing to judgment here. That has not been the policy of the Bush administration or of the Clinton administration before it.

Ms. BEAN. Well, specifically abandoning standards before status. Why is that a good idea?

Mr. BURNS. We are not abandoning standards. In fact, I just said in answer to a prior question that what will be very important in the future is that this new government adopt the standards and that the EU and NATO will have a job to make sure to monitor that those standards are being implemented, so we are not abandoning it at all.

We are not rushing to judgment. Eight years is a long, long time for the United Nations—

Ms. BEAN. Let me interrupt for a second.

Mr. BURNS. If I could just finish, Congresswoman?

Ms. BEAN. Okay.

Mr. BURNS. If you could just give me that courtesy? Eight years is a long time. This province was taken away from Serbia in effect by the United Nations Security Council, not by the United States, and the Serb Government has not shown the slightest interest in 8 years in improving the life of the majority or the minority population and so therefore it is our judgment that independence is the only way forward.

I agree with you. We should want to have the people facing forward, not backwards. A maintenance of the status quo would keep them locked in their ethnic divisions and in the acrimony of the past decade all the way back to the disintegration of Yugoslavia.

It is only by having this decision go forward that they will be able to face forward, and I said in the earlier parts of my testimony we want a good relationship with Serbia. We want to see the Serb Government as a partner and friend of the United States. It needs to commit itself to NATO and the EU and our principles in order to do that, and we believe that it can do that.

Ms. BEAN. But without the provisional government demonstrating an ability to meet the standards that you are now hopeful that they are going to achieve independently, what gives you any confidence that that is going to change?

Two hundred thousand Serbs have been driven out of their homes, while returning ethnic Albanians were brought back safely under the eye of the U.N. troops, but those Serbs have not been given the right to return. They have not been made to feel safe.

Fourteenth and 15th century cathedrals and monasteries were destroyed while our troops were there. They said well, we are here to protect people, not property. Help me understand how the Serbian people are going to feel anything but hostile toward this sort of solution given this recent history.

Mr. BURNS. The Serbs do have the right to return. The Serbs are welcome to return. Most of the Serbs who left after June 1999 left of their own accord. We hope that many will come back.

I said earlier, Congresswoman, in my testimony that I have visited a number of Serb families throughout Kosova, particularly in

one village, Obilic, a very important village in Serb history going back to the 14th century. I am convinced the vast majority of Serbs want to stay, and it is our insistence that they be allowed to stay, that they be embraced by the majority and that the Serb churches and cultural and historical sites be preserved.

In the Ahtisaari plan, there are specific provisions for NATO to guard the nine most important Serb historical sites and churches, and there are many, many others that will be protected by local police forces. It will be one of NATO's most important jobs to maintain to both protect human life, as well as these churches and buildings, and we are dedicated to that.

Chairman LANTOS. Thank you very much.

I am pleased to recognize my friend and colleague from Florida, Ileana Ros-Lehtinen.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you so much, Mr. Chairman. I thank the chairman for holding this very timely hearing, as he always does, but especially on this topic, which is of grave concern to me and of a personal issue as well.

I thank Ambassador Burns for once again taking on a difficult task and handling it so well with great aplomb. You represent our country and our values and our beliefs so well. Thank you for your wonderful service.

So many of us joined you, Mr. Chairman, in January when the chairman introduced H. Res. 36 calling for independence for Kosova. It has strong congressional support.

And now we are here with what is not a perfect plan. The Ahtisaari plan makes difficult demands on both sides, but I think that, as you have pointed out, we have gone beyond the differences, that it is not an independence this way or status quo.

We are really talking about a supervised independence versus an unsupervised unilaterally declared independence, which could have potential for chaos and violence in the region that we don't want to happen.

Kosova has so much potential as an independent area for being a strong partner, as you pointed out. As we have said, they are so pro-American. The Albanian community is so strongly with us, so pro-United States, a strong partner, and we want to make sure that we can provide the help to have strong political structures, to have a strong economy so that we can attract foreign investment in that country so that the rule of law is respected.

We understand that the Albanian majority has these legitimate expectations that they can't be suppressed indefinitely, and I hope that as this plan moves along that we will always keep that in mind, that that is what the Albanian majority wants as well. The demonstrations recently play that out so well that they want this, they need this, they deserve this.

I wanted to ask you, Mr. Ambassador, about the recent elections that took place in Serbia, the parliamentary elections. The results of that, as we know, were that the nationalistic radical party won the most votes. How would these results be expected to impact the status of Kosova?

Mr. BURNS. Thank you, Congresswoman Ros-Lehtinen, and thank you for your leadership. I really like the way that you just framed this whole debate. You kind of summed up the hearing.

I took down that a process of supervised independence is preferable to one of unsupervised chaos. I think that is the framework that we have been using to justify and rationalize this decision.

On the Serb elections, actually there were two significant positive developments. The three democratic parties control now 151 of the 250 seats in the parliament, and so they ought to be able to put together a coalition government that would represent reform and democracy and take the country forward to a good relationship with Europe and the United States.

Second, for the first time in a long time the Albanians of south Serbia participated in the process, didn't boycott it, have gone along now to try to integrate themselves.

No one here has asked about partition, but I was asked at the Council on Foreign Relations last night about whether we would agree to partition, to divide up Kosova in order to redraw the borders to accommodate ethnic majorities in certain locations, and I said absolutely not. The silver lining here is to see the Albanians of south Serbia begin to participate in this democratic process.

So while the radical party did well we think the democratic parties, the true democratic parties, can form a government. They are in the process of doing that. It has been very complicated for them. We look forward to working with that government.

I know Secretary Rice believes very strongly—President Bush and Secretary Rice—that we ought to be reaching out to this government in Belgrade and make it a friend in a very difficult time when we disagree on this issue of Kosova with it.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you, Mr. Ambassador.

Mr. BURNS. Thank you.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Chairman, if Mr. Engel gets a road and President Clinton gets a road, surely you are going to get an expressway, a thoroughfare, something. Not an alley. Not a no-outlet alley.

Chairman LANTOS. I will be very pleased if the folks will work out their problems on the ground.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you so much.

Chairman LANTOS. Mr. Ambassador, I know I speak for all of my colleagues in saluting your leadership on this very difficult and very complex issue.

Let me just add as one who still passionately believes in a bipartisan foreign policy, this is an outstanding example of bipartisan U.S. foreign policy succeeding.

I want to salute you and the Secretary, and you are assured of our full cooperation in bringing about this result.

This hearing is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 12:07 p.m. the committee was adjourned.]

