

**THE BALKANS AFTER THE INDEPENDENCE
OF KOSOVO AND ON THE EVE OF NATO
ENLARGEMENT**

HEARING
BEFORE THE
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ONE HUNDRED TENTH CONGRESS

SECOND SESSION

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THE BALKANS AFTER THE INDEPENDENCE OF KOSOVO AND ON THE EVE OF NATO EN- LARGEMENT

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 12, 2008,

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

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:25 a.m., in room 2154, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Howard L. Berman (chairman of the committee) presiding.

Chairman BERMAN. The committee will come to order. I apologize for the delay, and I feel there may be a few more coming, but I think we should get started.

The people of Kosovo will forever mark February 17th as a milestone. On that day, Kosovo declared its independence and ended nearly a decade of uncertainty as a U.N. protectorate. The new country has been formally recognized by the United States, Britain, France, Germany, Italy, and a number of other countries. I believe that this step will help shore up the security and stability of the Balkans.

I congratulate President Bush for his leadership on this issue. I also want to acknowledge our diplomatic corps in Pristina for their untiring efforts to oversee the process of stabilization, negotiation, and the resolution of Kosovo's final status. I also want to pay tribute to the Kosovar leadership, which demonstrated remarkable patience and maturity in the face of growing public pressure.

Questions have been raised in some sectors of the international community about the legality and legitimacy of Kosovo's declaration of independence, as well as America's recognition of the new country. I support the position of the administration and of our leading European allies that the situation in Kosovo is unique, given the history of ethnic cleansing, as well as the unprecedented level of involvement by the United Nations and NATO.

A year ago, I visited Kosovo with Senator John McCain, no less, at a time when he was visiting the Balkans instead of Ohio and Texas and Pennsylvania. I was struck by the immense need for economic development. As long as Kosovo's final status remained unresolved, businesses were reluctant to invest there, and international financial institutions were unable to offer the needed monetary assistance. Now that Kosovo's political status has been clarified, its leaders must focus on building a strong, healthy, and self-sustaining economy.

The challenge is immense: Kosovo has unacceptably high unemployment, is plagued by corruption, and has experienced limited economic growth. But it also has tremendous assets, among them, rich mineral resources, a young and resilient population, and a robust drive to succeed. The donors' conference scheduled for this summer should enable Americans, Europeans, and our international partners to devise an effective strategy to help boost Kosovo's economic development.

In addition, the leaders of Kosovo face the tremendous responsibility of ensuring that the fledgling country remains a safe and hospitable home for all citizens, including the Serb minority population. I welcome the government's early efforts to implement the wise recommendations made by former Finnish President Martti Ahtisaari, who served as the U.N. envoy to Kosovo during the status negotiations. These recommendations included the passage of laws on the protection of minorities, police, and local government.

I was also pleased that Kosovo's Prime Minister Hashim Thaci appointed two ethnic Serbs to this cabinet. However, I am troubled by reports that, in response to intimidation from officials in Belgrade, these ministers are currently sitting at home rather than continuing to work collaboratively with their Albanian colleagues.

The international community, particularly the NATO Kosovo Force, should continue to send strong and unambiguous signals that the minority communities can count on their protection. The Serbian minority must be allowed to prosper and participate in the new country.

While we recognize the immense pain that the resolution of Kosovo's final status has caused for many Serbs, it was shameful to see the United States Embassy in Belgrade in flames while Serbian police officers were idle bystanders watching the fire. When Bosnian-Serb protestors tried to launch a similar attack on American facilities in Banja Luka, police there were far more responsible in preventing it. Serbian political leaders must follow the rule of law, behave as a mature democracy, and urge restraint by Serbs throughout the region.

The recent reelection of Serbian President Boris Tadic was a welcome sign that the majority of Serbs decidedly do want a Western-oriented future. The voters supported a candidate who clearly stated his European aspirations over those who would have isolated Serbia.

My strong wish is that the Serbian people will reaffirm this decision in the snap Parliamentary elections called after the collapse of Prime Minister Vojislav Kostunica's government this past weekend. Voters will have the opportunity to indicate strong support for a Serbia that is firmly rooted in the Euro-Atlantic community rather than governed by radicals who seek closer ties to Russia.

Although Russia has presented itself as a good friend to Serbia and has been richly rewarded for its support with a 15-percent share of Serbia's state-owned oil company, the Serb people must realize that their future lies to the West and not to the East.

As it happens, this latest chapter in Balkan history is unfolding on the eve of the latest round of NATO enlargement, in particular, three Adriatic countries—Albania, Croatia, and Macedonia—are

seeking an invitation to join this military alliance at the Bucharest Summit in April.

There certainly are strong arguments for incorporating all three countries, particularly given the need to stabilize the region as the independence of Kosovo brings to a close the final stage of the dissolution of Yugoslavia. And, of course, there is a widely shared desire to welcome the region into the Euro-Atlantic community.

However, in order for NATO to stay strong and effective, it is important that new members fully meet the membership criteria. Today, I invite Assistant Secretary Fried to provide an assessment of the current readiness of these countries and their likely prospects for membership. The committee would also welcome your thoughts on whether the administration plans to support the extension of Membership Action Plans to the countries Georgia and Ukraine.

Over a century ago, the geopolitical term "Balkanization" emerged to denote what happens when empires or countries fragment into smaller states that are often hostile to one another. It is my hope that, during the 21st Century, this term will fall into disuse.

For many years, the Balkan region has been the stage for compelling and dramatic action that plays out in unforeseen ways. It remains a site of strategic importance to the United States and Europe. This committee looks forward to discussing the changes and challenges in the Balkans today with our distinguished witness.

Normally, at this time, we would turn to Ranking Member Ileana Ros-Lehtinen for her remarks, and we wait today, but she has just come back from Florida, where she received an honor that I will now speak to, since this was written for me before we thought she would be here.

The honor she earned last evening was being inducted into Florida Women's Hall of Fame. She joined the ranks there of achievers, the likes of tennis legend Chris Evert and Janet Reno, the first female attorney general of the United States.

The Florida Women's Hall of Fame honors those who have made significant contributions to the improvement of life for women and for all citizens of the state. The State Commission on the Status of Women chooses the finalists each year, and the Governor selects the inductees.

In announcing this tribute to Ileana, the Hall of Fame described her, that which we already know here in the committee and in the House, as "a gifted leader and a strong defender of human rights," and took note of her early work as an educator, her service in the state Senate, and her commitment to protecting the environment. All of this, plus Ileana's well-known work on the committee and her dedication to her husband and two daughters, have combined to make this living dynamo the wonder we know her to be.

So, congratulations, Ileana, and I recognize you for your opening statement.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. That was an unexpected surprise. Thank you. Who knew that the plane would land on time, so I was able to actually make the hearing?

Thank you, Mr. Chairman for holding this very timely hearing, and thank you to Assistant Secretary Fried for being here with us

today to discuss these critical issues that the chairman had pointed out in his opening statement. I look forward to hearing from you, Mr. Secretary, on your assessment on the potential impact of the Kosovo declaration of independence on the stability of the entire region and whether it could present a challenge to our United States policy in that region, given the existence of those who continue to see violence as an option, despite the destruction wrought by the conflicts in the 1990s.

Soon after taking power in 1989, Serbia's former leader, Milosevic, used radical nationalism to crack down on Kosovo's ethnic Albanian population, imposing oppressive and discriminatory policies and taking away their previously held economy.

The situation in Kosovo deteriorated drastically and, by 1999, led United States and our NATO allies to intervene militarily in order to stop an ethnic cleansing that was being carried out by Milosevic and his military against Kosovo's ethnic Albanians.

Just 9 years ago, NATO bombed Serbian cities, its infrastructure, and military forces for 78 days, forcing those forces to pull out of Kosovo. Since then, Kosovo has been administered, as we know, by the United Nations, with the backing of a NATO-led, peacekeeping force.

Over the past 2 years, strong efforts have been made by the United States and our European Union allies to bring Serbia and the Albanians in Kosovo to an agreement on a peaceful settlement of Kosovo's future status.

Last year, the U.N. envoy presented a proposal that would have provided for Kosovo's supervised independence, accompanied by strong protection of minority rights and multi-ethnic representation in the Government of Kosovo. That plan was, and continues to be, supported by the United States and most of our European allies, but it was rejected by Serbia and Russia and subsequent talks between the European Union, the United States, and Russia failed to arrive at an agreement.

Kosovo then went ahead and declared its independence on February 17th of this year, while accepting the obligations included in the U.N. envoy's plan.

The United States and many other countries recognize Kosovo's independence; however, a range of other countries, including Spain, Greece, Cyprus, Romania, Canada, China, and India, have, thus far, refrained from such recognition, possibly for fear of encouraging separatists or independence movements in their own countries.

Russia, of course, continues to call the declaration of independence by Kosovo and its recognition a violation of international law. The declaration of independence was followed by protests and violence in Serbia and the Serb portions of Kosovo and Bosnia, including an attack on the United States Embassy in Serbia and an attempted attack on the United States Consulate in Bosnia, and the destruction of two customs posts on the border between Serbia and Kosovo.

Such violence could well subside, or it could lead to more serious conflict. If it leads to conflict, we need to know how the burden of restoring stability will be shared by our European allies.

In November, I wrote to President Bush to express my concern that, given our obligations in other parts of the world, we need to be certain that our European allies will provide additional troops for Kosovo if such troops are needed.

I received a response from the Department of State expressing confidence that our European allies are committed to do just that. [The prepared statement of Ms. Ros-Lehtinen follows:]

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

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for holding this important hearing.

I want to also thank Assistant Secretary Fried for being here with us today to discuss these critical issues.

I look forward to hearing Secretary Fried's assessment on the potential impact of Kosovo's declaration of independence on the stability of the Balkans, and whether it could present a challenge to United States policy in that region, given the existence of those who continue to see violence as an option, despite the destruction wrought by the conflicts of the 1990s.

Soon after taking power in 1989, Serbia's former leader Milosevic used radical nationalism to crack down on Kosovo's ethnic Albanian population, imposing oppressive and discriminatory policies and taking away their previously-held autonomy.

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Last year, the UN envoy presented a proposal that would have provided for Kosovo's "supervised independence," accompanied by strong protection of minority rights and multiethnic representation in the government of Kosovo.

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- an attack on the U.S. embassy in Serbia;
- an attempted attack on the U.S. consulate in Bosnia; and
- the destruction of two customs posts on the border between Serbia and Kosovo.

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I received a response from the Department of State expressing confidence that our European allies are committed to do just that.

I ask unanimous consent that the text of that letter be inserted in the record of this hearing at this point.

Secretary Fried, we would appreciate any details or further information you could provide concerning your discussions with our European allies to ensure they are committed to providing the troops needed in such a case.

I would also be interested in hearing your thoughts on how Kosovo's independence is expected to impact the sometimes fragile political situation in Bosnia, where it has been reported that some Serb nationalists have pressed for a declaration of independence from Bosnia by the Serb portion of that country.

What arguments are we raising with the ethnic Serbs in Bosnia to dissuade them from such a declaration of independence?

With respect to ethnic Albanian communities in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, what steps are we taking to ensure that there is no misinterpretation by any of the parties within the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia regarding the meaning of Kosovo's declaration of independence for the future of that country?

Finally, I ask for your comments on the argument that the recognition of Kosovo's independence sets a precedent for future recognition of other separatist movements.

For example, how does this recognition of Kosovo's independence by the U.S. apply, if at all, to the future status of regions like Nagorno-Karabakh in Azerbaijan and Abkhazia in Georgia, both of which are governed by separatist movements?

I look forward to your testimony and comments, and, once again, thank you for your appearance before our Committee today.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Chairman, I ask unanimous consent that the text of that letter be inserted in the record of this hearing at this point.

Chairman BERMAN. Without objection.
[The information referred to follows:]



United States Department of State

Washington, D.C. 20520

JAN 8 - 2008

Dear Ms. Ros-Lehtinen:

Thank you for your letter of November 20, 2007 to President Bush regarding your concerns with the readiness of KFOR troops in Kosovo and the commitments of EU nations deployed to Kosovo. We have been asked to respond on the President's behalf.

The results of the December 14 meeting of the EU Heads of Government underscore that our European partners share our view of Kosovo as an important security and political challenge on their continent that demands significant resources and attention. At their meeting, EU Heads of State in Brussels issued conclusions on Kosovo that noted the Troika process has been exhausted, agreed with UNSYG that the status quo in Kosovo is unsustainable and confirmed that the EU stands ready to play a leading role in strengthening stability in the region. EU leaders reemphasized the priority they give to promoting stability in Southeast Europe and to integrating the region into the Euro-Atlantic community.

One of the key pillars of the effort to maintain stability in Kosovo is KFOR. Currently, of the over 16,500 troops in KFOR, over 80 percent or roughly 13,400 are from EU member states and 1,500 are from the United States. KFOR is coordinating well with other key organizations, including UNMIK, the EU Planning Team in Kosovo and the U.S. Office in Pristina, to prepare for post-Independence contingencies. The French Commander of KFOR, Lieutenant General Xavier Bout de Marnhac, reports that KFOR, building on lessons learned during the March 2004 unrest in Kosovo, is more flexible, has improved its training and equipment, and is ready for contingencies in the event of violence. In 2004 many KFOR contributing nations had restrictive caveats on their troops limiting their mission tasks,

The Honorable
Ileana Ros-Lehtinen,
House of Representatives.

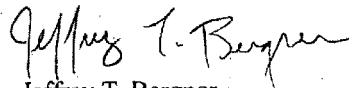
mobility, and ultimately their utility. Today, nearly 90 percent of KFOR personnel, from 26 of the 34 contributing nations, have no restrictive caveats. The others have only minor usage caveats which should not impede KFOR's responsiveness to deal with developing situations on the ground. KFOR has developed a strong public outreach program in Kosovo to reassure Albanians and Serbs alike of its commitment to provide a safe and secure environment in Kosovo.

We are confident that European allies will be ready to fully assist if additional troop and weapons deployments become necessary to address violence in Kosovo. NATO's European Allies have designated several rapidly deployable operational reserve battalions to reinforce KFOR if the situation dictates, with the capability of providing additional European units from NATO's strategic reserve.

We are working intensively with our European allies to pursue a political solution that will minimize the probability of violence in the region and resolve finally the question of Kosovo's status so that the entire region can move forward towards a stable and prosperous future. In the absence of any agreement between Serbia and Kosovo, the plan of UN envoy Maarti Ahtisaari for Kosovo's supervised independence offers the best way forward. In addition to coordinated diplomatic efforts to resolve the question of Kosovo's status, the U.S. is not only deeply involved in planning to ensure that any such transition takes place peacefully but also working hard to be prepared to respond to any provocations. This includes prevention and mitigation of population movements, maintenance of a safe and secure environment, strict attention to minority rights and protection of cultural and religious heritage sites, and protection of key infrastructure. KFOR will play an important -- but not exclusive -- role in this effort.

We hope this information is helpful in addressing your concerns. Please feel free to contact us further on this or any matter of concern to you.

Sincerely,



Jeffrey T. Bergner
Assistant Secretary
Legislative Affairs

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. So, Secretary Fried, we would appreciate any details or further information that you could provide to us concerning your discussions with our European allies to ensure that they are, indeed, committed to providing the troops needed in such a case, and I would also be interested in hearing your thoughts on how Kosovo's independence is expected to impact the sometimes fragile political situation in Bosnia, where it has been reported that some Serb nationalists have pressed for a declaration of independence from Bosnia by the Serb portion of that country.

What arguments are we raising with the ethnic Serbs in Bosnia to dissuade them from such a declaration of independence?

With respect to the ethnic Albanian communities in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, what steps are we taking to ensure that there is no misinterpretation by any of the parties within the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia regarding the meaning of Kosovo's independence for the future of that country?

Finally, Mr. Secretary, I ask for your comments on the argument that the recognition of Kosovo's independence sets a precedent for future recognition of other separatist movements. For example, how does this recognition of Kosovo's independence by the United States apply, if at all, to the future status of regions such as Azerbaijan and Georgia, both of which are governed by separatist movements?

I look forward to your testimony, Mr. Secretary, and your comments and, once again, thank you for your appearance before our committee today, and thank you again, Mr. Chairman, for the kind words.

Chairman BERMAN. Well, thank you, and calculations again.

Do any other members of the committee wish to make an opening statement? Mr. Engel is recognized.

Mr. ENGEL. Thank you. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and it is good to see you in the chair, and it is good to see my good friend, Dan Fried, testifying. I know of no one who has worked harder on this issue and who has the depth of knowledge that Secretary Fried has, and I am eagerly awaiting to listen to what he has to say.

I have been to Kosova many, many times in the 19-plus years that I have been in Congress. I have been a supporter of Kosova independence all of that time. I truly believe that there is no alternative to Kosova independence. The breakup of the former Yugoslavia gave the people of Kosova, in my opinion, the same opportunity that all of the rest of the peoples of the former Yugoslavia had, and that is self-determination, and, therefore, people who say this is some kind of precedent are absolutely wrong because Yugoslavia has gone, it has broken up, and there is no reason why the people of Kosova should not have the same rights of self-determination that all of the other peoples of the former Yugoslavia have.

We have all of these nations born out of Yugoslavia—Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Slovenia, and Serbia as well—and, therefore, Kosova is the same. The Ahtisaari plan absolutely makes the most sense. It is independence, but it is supervised independence at the beginning, so there is some stability, and I think, frankly,

the Bush administration has handled this absolutely correctly and right in terms of recognition.

I am proud of the role the United States has played, and, of course, the people of Kosova are so pro-United States, it is one of the places in the world where chants of USA just break out all of the time. When independence was declared, I think we saw more American flags in the streets of Pristina than Albanian flags or the new Kosova flag.

That is the high esteem that the people there hold for the United States, and certainly after 1999 and the ethnic cleansing of the former dictator, Milosevic, there is no way that Belgrade could have ruled Kosova ever again. So this is the logical conclusion.

There is a lot of work to do. It is a start, not an end, and the international community has to be engaged, and the United States has to be engaged, but I am absolutely convinced that this is not only the right way to go, the moral way to go, but the correct way to go in terms of doing what is right and in doing what is right for stability in the region.

I intend to go to Kosova again when there will be an international celebration and hope that many of my colleagues can come as well. Again, to Kosova, independence is not a precedent, as some of the other countries have said, that every separatist group in the world is going to declare independence. Because of the unique circumstances of the genocide, the ethnic cleansing that Milosevic was carrying out, because of the fact that the former Yugoslavia has broken up—we are not discussing whether it should—it is gone—this is not a precedent; this is just a natural progression of things.

So I, again, want to, as I always have, congratulate Dan Fried for the wonderful work that he has done personally and for the work that we, as Americans, have all done together. I look forward again to going to Kosova.

I also am looking forward to hearing what Secretary Fried has to say about the NATO Bucharest Summit coming in April. I am a supporter of Albania, Croatia, and Macedonia becoming a part of NATO, and I am interested in hearing what the secretary has to say about that. I think now, more than ever, incorporating the Adriatic three countries that I mentioned is critical for Balkan stability and cooperation.

So thank you, Mr. Chairman, and, Mr. Secretary, I look forward to hearing your testimony. Thank you.

Chairman BERMAN. Thank you. Any other members wish to make an opening statement?

[No response.]

Chairman BERMAN. In that case, we want to welcome Assistant Secretary of State Fried. Dan Fried has been a career Foreign Service officer, former United States Ambassador to Poland, a member of the National Security Council staff, and generally receives very high reviews for the work he has done and is doing now as assistant secretary.

Welcome. You know the procedure. We will include your entire statement in the record and look forward to your testimony, Secretary Fried. Let me just say, I guess some bells went off. I guess it is a procedural vote. Unless you have strong objections, I am willing to stay and even miss this vote, if it is truly as procedural

as I think it is, and complete the secretary's testimony, and then, if we are still in voting, we will go vote and come back for questions.

Secretary Fried, go ahead.

STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE DANIEL FRIED, ASSISTANT SECRETARY, BUREAU OF EUROPEAN AND EURASIAN AFFAIRS, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Mr. FRIED. Acting Chairman Berman, Ranking Member Ros-Lehtinen, members of the committee, thank you for giving me this opportunity to discuss the current status of the political situation in the Balkans. I look forward to working with you, Mr. Chairman, and I would like, at the outset, to express my own sense of loss, the administration's sense of loss as well, at the passing of Chairman Lantos. We will miss his moral voice. I will miss it, personally.

Mr. Chairman, members, the 20th Century began with the assassination of Archduke Ferdinand and ended with the dissolution of Yugoslavia. These two bloody conflicts were provoked by the same scourge of violent ethnic nationalism, and, given this history, America's efforts in the Balkans, over three administrations, have been based on one overarching objective: The integration of the region into Euro-Atlantic institutions.

Since 1945, and, again, since 1989, these institutions—the European Union and NATO—have helped historical enemies in Europe find reconciliation and friendship.

Kosovo's declaration of independence was the last chapter in the dissolution of Yugoslavia. Yugoslavia had its merits as a way to deal with that region's ethnic mix, but it is gone. Slobodan Milosevic's ravages ended this multinational effort, and its breakup was exceedingly violent.

In 1989, Milosevic stripped Kosovo of its autonomy. Wars followed. Milosevic's policy of ethnic cleansing of Kosovar Albanians forced NATO's intervention in Kosovo in 1999.

The United Nations administered Kosovo after the end of the conflict, acting under U.N. Security Council Resolution 1244. That same resolution authorized a NATO-led, peacekeeping force to provide for a safe and secure environment. International negotiations about Kosovo's status failed to bring Belgrade and Pristina closer together. U.N. Special Envoy Martti Ahtisaari, nevertheless, recommended a compromised blueprint for Kosovo's future: Supervised independence and a comprehensive plan to provide protection for minorities, especially the Serbian minority in Kosovo.

The Kosovo leadership accepted that compromise; Belgrade did not. The people of Kosovo, on February 17th, declared independence, which the United States and most European countries have now recognized. We could not leave Kosovo in limbo indefinitely. Instead, we have supported the birth of the world's newest democracy.

I visited Kosovo last Friday. The Kosovo leadership is rightly focused on building its country. I met as well with the two ethnic Serb government ministers, who are, in fact, active, I am happy to report, and stressed that they want their community to remain and prosper in Kosovo, which is good news.

I should add, Mr. Chairman, that they specifically requested that I mention in this testimony that they are committed to work for the good of the Serbian community in Kosovo, despite independence, and that they reject any kind of violence. They asked for our help, and I said that we would do what we could.

The international community has a responsibility to help Kosovo, and I can report that this is, indeed, happening. Kosovo will be supervised for a period of time by an international civilian office that will be European led, with strong United States participation. The European Union will deploy a rule-of-law mission, called "EULEX," to Kosovo, with almost 2,000 international staff and over 1,000 local staff.

NATO, through KFOR, will continue to provide security on the ground and is authorized to operate throughout Kosovo under U.N. Security Council Resolution 1244. NATO will continue to play a role in the establishment of a new Kosovo security force and a civilian agency to oversee it. Our allies are, in fact, doing what they need to. About 90 percent of the KFOR troops are non-United States; they are European.

With our assistance and the support of the World Bank and IMF, Kosovo will be viable. The United States will participate in a major donors' conference this summer. Although Europe will contribute much assistance, the United States and other partners will play a role.

Thirty-two countries have recognized Kosovo, or declared their intention to do so, including about two-thirds of the European Union.

Chairman BERMAN. Mr. Secretary, I am going to interrupt you here. I was wrong. It is not just a procedural vote. If this motion passes, the entire government collapses.

So I am going to recess this hearing for a few minutes and go make that vote to keep the government intact and then come back.

Mr. FRIED. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I will be here.

[Whereupon, a short recess was taken.]

Mr. PRICE [presiding]. If we might come back to order, the chairman is detained on the floor, and I apologize, Mr. Secretary. It is a real inconvenience when they expect you to vote around here from time to time. We apologize and thank you for your patience and also your appearance here this morning. So, please, the floor is yours.

Mr. FRIED. Thank you. To continue, emotions in Serbia run high over Kosovo. We recognize Serbia's opposition to Kosovo's independence and, for that reason, have reached out to Serbia. This makes the February 21st mob attack on our Embassy and other Embassies in Belgrade all the more disgraceful.

We hold Serbian authorities accountable for the safety of our diplomats and facilities. We cannot overlook such acts of violence, but barring future such problems, our diplomatic efforts must be focused on helping Serbia find a future within the European and transatlantic family. The choice is Serbia's to make. Serbia could have a great future as part of an undivided Europe, and Serbia has a legitimate interest in the welfare of Kosovo's Serb community, and this is provided for under the Ahtisaari plan. Hopefully, Ser-

bia's leaders will resist, as they must, the lure of nationalist demagoguery and self-isolation.

There cannot be long-term stability in the Balkans without progress in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The reform process there has lost momentum. We have witnessed an increase in divisive nationalist rhetoric. Political leaders there need to show courage to find a way forward together. Without a resumption of progress, Bosnia and Herzegovina risk regressing along national lines.

Some leaders of the Bosnian entity known as Republika Srpska have claimed parallels between Kosovo and themselves and are playing with the fires of secession. They need to stop rhetoric that can take on a dangerous life of its own. They must not undermine the Dayton Constitution that is, in fact, the foundation for the existence of the Republika Srpska.

Bosniak nationalist calls for the abolition of the Republika Srpska are also unacceptable and have contributed to radicalizations. Reforms may upgrade, but cannot supplant, Dayton, which stopped the fighting in Bosnia years ago.

On an encouraging note, the three members of the Adriatic Charter—Albania, Croatia, and Macedonia—are on a positive trajectory. All are now contributing to international security and to NATO operations. All three have troops on the ground in Afghanistan. The United States wants to see these countries join NATO, and NATO is poised to make decisions in Bucharest early next month.

We hope that the issue between Macedonia and Greece over the name of Macedonia can be resolved in a constructive way. The United States is encouraging both parties to work with U.N. Negotiator Matt Nimetz to use the time remaining to come to a solution. The United States will do what it can to help this process.

I have given an overview of this administration's approach to the Balkans. It is a key region for us and our European allies. We have made progress helping this region move from war to peace, from disintegration to sustainable development, and toward a European and Euro-Atlantic future.

I thank you for the opportunity to share thoughts with you, and I am now happy to answer all questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Fried follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE DANIEL FRIED, ASSISTANT SECRETARY,
BUREAU OF EUROPEAN AND EURASIAN AFFAIRS, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Acting Chairman Berman, Ranking Member Ros-Lehtinen, Members of the Committee, thank you for giving me this opportunity to discuss the current status of the political situation in the Balkans. Before I proceed, I would like once again to share our sense of loss at the passing of Chairman Lantos. His was a moral voice that will be deeply missed. We look forward to working with the new Chairman.

Geography places the Balkans at an edge of Europe; history puts it front and center. The 20th century began with the assassination of Archduke Ferdinand and ended with the dissolution of Yugoslavia. The two very bloody conflicts that sandwiched the last century were fueled by the same scourge: violent ethnic nationalism. It should not surprise that the noun associated with the region is "Balkanization." The term was coined in 1919 and Merriam-Webster defines it as "to break up into smaller and often hostile units."

Given this history, our efforts in the Balkans are based on one overarching objective: the integration of the region into Euro-Atlantic institutions. Over the decades, those institutions helped historical enemies in Europe to overcome their enmity and to shore up democracy where its foundations needed strengthening. After 1989, we saw the former communist states of Central Europe accelerate political and eco-

conomic transformation as they entered NATO and the EU. Bulgaria and Romania succeeded under this model. The rest of the Balkans can follow.

For the past 15 years, three U.S. administrations have sought to stabilize the region and facilitate its post-communist transition, investing significant diplomatic capital and assistance funds. Three American Presidents—Presidents George W. Bush, Bill Clinton and George H.W. Bush—articulated and advanced the strategic objective of helping Europe become whole, free, and at peace.

Today as we take stock, we can see that several countries have turned a corner. Much work remains, but realism about challenges ahead should not obscure the prospects for success. I will start this overview with:

- Kosovo, Europe’s newest democracy.
- Then, I will address Serbia, whose path to Europe must be nurtured, even more so in the wake of Kosovo’s declaration of independence.
- Following that, I will discuss Bosnia and Herzegovina, which is in need of reform.
- Finally, I will discuss the so-called Adriatic three—Albania, Croatia and Macedonia and another newly independent state—Montenegro.

Kosovo’s declaration of independence was the last chapter in the dissolution of Yugoslavia. Whether Yugoslavia had its merits as one way to deal with that region’s ethnic mix is a matter for historians. Slobodan Milosevic’s ravages ended this multinational effort.

The break up of Yugoslavia was nonconsensual and exceedingly violent. In 1989, Milosevic stripped Kosovo of the autonomy it had enjoyed within Yugoslavia. This act of nationalist chauvinism sowed the seeds of the entire Balkans conflict. Wars throughout the region followed. An apartheid-like system of ethnic rule in Kosovo and Milosevic’s policy of ethnic cleansing of Kosovar Albanians necessitated NATO intervention in Kosovo in 1999.

The United Nations, whose Security Council had issued seven resolutions on Kosovo, administered Kosovo since the end of the conflict acting under Resolution 1244. That same resolution authorized a NATO-led peacekeeping force to provide for a safe and secure environment. These could only be temporary arrangements.

International negotiations on Kosovo’s status lasted two years. Both the efforts of UN Special Envoy Martti Ahtisaari and the EU-US-Russia Troika did not bring Belgrade and Pristina closer together. But President Ahtisaari nevertheless provided a blueprint for Kosovo’s future: a comprehensive plan to ensure protection of minorities and to foster Kosovo’s democratic development.

The people of Kosovo understandably refused to endure perpetual uncertainty about their status. On February 17, agreeing with the Troika that there was no prospect of an agreement with Serbia, they brought closure to the issue by declaring Kosovo to be an independent and sovereign state. In its declaration, the Kosovo Assembly committed to implementing the Ahtisaari Plan and invited the international community to supervise its implementation. In response, the United States and key European partners recognized Kosovo’s independence, in line with the recommendations of UN Special Envoy Martti Ahtisaari.

We must deal with short-term challenges of security and longer-term challenges of Kosovo’s development. These are serious. Many things can go wrong and some things probably will. But leaving Kosovo in limbo under UN administration could not continue indefinitely. Instead, we have witnessed the birth of the world’s newest democracy.

Since independence, the Kosovars have moved swiftly to implement obligations under the Ahtisaari Plan to respect and above all protect minorities, especially the Serbs. The Government of Kosovo not only includes Serb ministers, but also has taken steps to reach out to local Serbs and assure them they are welcome in a multi-ethnic Kosovo. It is significant that Serbs have not left Kosovo to become refugees in Serbia. While these are still early days, that is a good beginning.

The international community now has a responsibility to assist Kosovo develop.

With its explicit consent, Kosovo will be “supervised” for a period by an International Civilian Office (ICO). This office will be European-led, but with strong U.S. participation. In late February, a newly formed International Steering Group for Kosovo appointed former Dutch diplomat Pieter Feith to be the International Civilian Representative for Kosovo to head the ICO. In this capacity, Mr. Feith will possess certain executive powers to ensure the Ahtisaari Plan is fully implemented.

The ICO deputy is a senior U.S. Foreign Service Officer, and the Administration also will send a number of other State Department staff and contractors to the operation. The United States will cover 25 percent of ICO operating costs, with the

remainder coming from contributions from the European Commission, and other states.

The EU will deploy a rule of law mission, called “EULEX,” to Kosovo, with around 1,900 international staff and around 1,100 local staff. Its mission will include support and training for the Kosovo police and judicial system. The United States has made a commitment in principle to participate in this key European Security and Defense Policy mission with approximately 80 police, 2 judges and 4–6 prosecutors. The EU will bear the brunt of the 190 million euro annual operating cost of the mission.

NATO, through KFOR, has continued to provide security on the ground. It remains authorized to operate in Kosovo under UNSCR 1244. We expect that NATO will also play a key role in the establishment of a new Kosovo Security Force and a civilian agency to oversee it. Kosovo is eager to contribute to NATO, the organization that intervened to save the people of Kosovo during their darkest hour.

These three institutions: the ICO, EULEX, and KFOR will help put Kosovo on the right trajectory—toward Europe and away from the Balkan cycle of dictatorship, nationalism, and war.

Kosovo may not be a strong country now, but with our assistance, and the support of the World Bank and IMF, Kosovo will be viable. It has large lignite coal reserves; it has hydro-power potential. It has a young, motivated population, yearning to join the European family. We need, however, to focus international resources on realizing the economic potential of Kosovo’s industrious people.

To do this, the United States will participate in a major donors’ conference this summer. Although Europe will contribute the majority of assistance to Kosovo, the United States and other international partners will play a role to lift Kosovo out of the economic stagnation of the last decades.

We anticipate that the EU and its member states will provide roughly 50 percent of the significant assistance that Kosovo will need in its first few years.

Kosovo has been making good progress in the month since independence. A total of 32 countries have recognized or declared their intent to recognize soon, including most of the EU member states. More will follow in due course.

SERBIA

I will now turn my attention to Serbia, which has opposed Kosovo’s independence. I need not tell you that emotions have run high over this issue in Serbia. We understand Serbia’s opposition to Kosovo’s independence, and for that reason have reached out to Serbian leaders during what has been a painful period for them.

This makes the mob attack on our embassy and other embassies in Belgrade all the more disgraceful. I have spoken on other occasions about this violation of the Vienna Convention and will not dwell on it here, except to stress to the Committee that we hold Serbian authorities accountable for the safety of our diplomats and facilities.

We cannot overlook acts of violence, such as attacks on our Embassy in Belgrade, but barring such lapses in civilized behavior, our diplomatic efforts must now be focused on bringing Serbia back to the trans-Atlantic family of nations. Serbia is an important country in that region and an ally in two world wars that has much to contribute.

The choice must be for the people of Serbia to make, of course. Serbia could have a great future as part of an undivided Europe, which has made clear that it will welcome Serbia. But Serbia’s leaders must resist the lure of nationalist demagoguery and forthrightly face their country’s war legacy.

Serbia’s own people deserve better, and many are demanding better. Much has been heard of the strong Serb feelings about Kosovo. And it is true that you will probably find very few people in Serbia who wanted to see Kosovo declare independence. It is also true, however, that polls show that more than 70 percent of Serbians want integration with the EU and cite unemployment as a greater concern than the fate of Kosovo. Keeping Kosovo’s status an open question would have continued to distract Serbia’s leaders from addressing the concerns of their citizens.

Serbia has a legitimate interest in the welfare of the Serbs in Kosovo. The Ahtisaari negotiations and other efforts have given Belgrade every opportunity to shape arrangements for their protection and support. But to exercise its influence effectively, it must put aside policies of disruption and destruction, and partner with the international community and the Kosovo authorities as a good neighbor.

Serbia can, if it makes wise choices, hasten the day when Kosovo and Serbia find themselves together within the EU. The EU has been the institution through which seemingly intractable national conflicts in Europe have been resolved, and it can be so for Serbia.

BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA

Serbia's attitude will also have an impact on its western neighbor, Bosnia-Herzegovina. There cannot be long-term stability in the Balkans without progress in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The reform process there lost momentum following the failure of constitutional reform in April 2006, and in place of forward momentum, we have witnessed an increase in divisive nationalist rhetoric. Politicians need again to exhibit political courage to compromise on key reforms needed to modernize the country's governing structures and prepare it for further Euro-Atlantic integration. They cannot afford to be lured by nationalist demagoguery, but this temptation exists among all ethnic groups.

Without a resumption of progress, Bosnia and Herzegovina will regress along nationalist lines.

Some leaders of the Bosnian entity bordering Serbia, known as Republika Srpska (or RS), have claimed parallels between Kosovo and their own future, playing with the fire of secession. They need to stop rhetoric that can take on a dangerous life of its own, and instead promote the functioning of the Bosnian state government. In short, they must not undermine the Dayton constitution that is in fact the foundation of the existence of the RS.

By the same token, Bosniak nationalist calls for the abolition of the RS are also unacceptable and have contributed to political radicalization. Reforms may upgrade but cannot supplant Dayton, which stopped the fighting, established Bosnia and Herzegovina's internal structures, reconfirmed its territorial integrity, and garnered the support of members from all three constituent peoples.

Given our concern over the stalled reform agenda in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the United States supported the Peace Implementation Council's February 27 decision to continue the Office of the High Representative and focus on completing key objectives to ensure BiH's self-sustaining stability. These objectives, once met, will provide greater confidence that Bosnia is on an irreversible path toward Euro-Atlantic institutions.

The next few months will be critical for Bosnia and Herzegovina. If BiH's leaders can enact legislation to reform the country's police structure, it will open the door to a closer relationship with the EU. Brussels has indicated a willingness to sign a Stabilization and Association Agreement soon should Bosnia and Herzegovina meet this requirement, a process we firmly support.

ADRIATIC CHARTER

Encouragingly, the three members of the Adriatic Charter—Albania, Croatia, and Macedonia—are on a positive trajectory. They show that political reform, inter-ethnic reconciliation, and economic development are achievable in the Balkans. All are now net contributors to international security. All three have succeeded in creating workable democratic institutions and free market economies. All three are with us in Afghanistan. The United States wants to see the A3 join NATO as soon as they demonstrate they meet NATO performance-based standards, and the Alliance is now considering that question for the Bucharest summit. Experience shows that progress, reforms, and constructive regional and international behavior will only grow stronger once inside the Alliance.

Albania has made steady progress on corruption, with arrests of even high-level government officials, substantial progress on judicial reform, and progress on laws to increase transparency and efficiency within the court system. Albania has strengthened its multi-party parliamentary democratic system and has focused on building consensus for further reforms. Albania's Constitution provides for pluralism and religious coexistence, and the Albanian government upholds these rights in practice. Increased tax revenue and central government staffing cuts from Albanian reform efforts have enabled the Albanian government to double its education and health budgets and boost infrastructure investment.

Albania has a full company of troops in Mosul, Iraq, now on its 10th consecutive rotation—committed to staying until the end of the mission. Albania increased its Afghanistan commitments last fall by a full company, up from a platoon.

Croatians have built a functioning democracy through a stable, multi-party democratic political system. For example, ethnic Serbs and Croats now work together in the new government, demonstrating that such inter-ethnic cooperation is indeed possible elsewhere in the Balkans, including in Kosovo. The Croatian Serb party is supporting the center-right Croatian Democratic Party (HDZ) party, and one of its members is a deputy Prime Minister, something unthinkable five years ago.

Croatia is a valuable partner of U.S. and NATO Allies in the International Security and Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan. Croatia bears all of its costs for

participation in operation and has no caveats attached to its forces. Croatia plans to increase its participation in ISAF in 2008.

Croatia is working to close remaining war-legacy issues, primarily concerning returning refugees. It has reported meeting its 2007 benchmarks on providing housing units to returning refugees. Satisfactory resolution of this and related issues are explicitly included among the EU's criteria for Croatia's eventual accession to the Union. Judicial reform and attacking corruption remain another challenge, but the Croatian government is making progress. On property restitution issues, the government has promised to, but not yet amended, legislation to put non-citizens on an even footing with Croatians. The government must consider and plan for how many claims there may be against Croatia, how it would pay for these claims without threatening public finances, and how it will adopt procedures for implementing the amended law.

The commitment of successive Macedonian governments to uphold enhanced minority rights under the 2001 Ohrid Accord has brought the country forward. These efforts have broadened domestic political consensus and strengthened ethnic minority participation in decision-making. Macedonia's progress on economic reform and fighting corruption were praised by the World Bank and Transparency International.

Macedonia has expanded steadily its contributions to international coalition operations and has able troops fighting alongside ours in Iraq and Afghanistan. Public and government support for NATO and these deployments has been very high and steady. Eleven Macedonian soldiers died recently in a helicopter crash returning from peace keeping operation duty in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Although Macedonia's practical, business, and people-to-people ties with Greece are good, differences over Macedonia's name pose a serious problem. The Administration has repeatedly emphasized its support for the ongoing UN-facilitated talks on the name issue. It has pressed both parties to work with UN negotiator Matt Nimetz to use the time remaining before Bucharest to come to a solution—and not to allow this issue to prevent Macedonia from being invited to join NATO if allies so decide.

Montenegro is now approaching the second anniversary of its independence, its divorce from Serbia having been negotiated under international auspices and based on a free and fair referendum. Its new constitution was adopted in Parliament last October with widespread support. While Montenegro too has internal ethnic differences, its leaders and people have addressed them through legal and peaceful means, allowing reform and economic growth to accelerate. Significantly, the Montenegrins are not dwelling on the past but making up for lost time, including making the most of their membership in NATO's Partnership for Peace and the Stabilization and Association Agreement signed with the EU last summer.

INSTITUTIONS

Increasingly, the countries of Southeast Europe are working together to overcome common problems and finding they need less assistance from the United States and the EU. The Central European Free Trade Agreement created a small common market and aided economic growth in the 1990s for countries that have since joined the EU. The effort to expand this arrangement to the Western Balkans culminated when Serbia ratified it in September 2007. The Stability Pact for Southeast Europe was another initiative of the 1990s that sought to help integrate and stabilize the region through practical cooperation in fields like customs, investment, and law enforcement. While that organization was largely a U.S. and West European initiative, it has just passed the baton to a new Regional Cooperation Council. This new body is based in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, while the predecessor was in Brussels. The new Secretary General is a Croat, while his predecessor was an Austrian. These developments are real evidence of the deepening stability and maturity of societies in Southeast Europe. They show that the glass is way more than half full and filling.

CONCLUSION

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, I've given you today an overview of the policies of this Administration toward the Balkans. It is a key region for us and for our European allies. We have made progress helping this region move from war to peace, from disintegration to sustainable development, and from a European to a Euro-Atlantic future. We have much work to do, though we have already achieved much.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to come and share our thoughts with you. I will be happy to answer your questions.

Mr. BURTON. I might have a comment or two. I am not sure I have any questions. I am sorry I was not here for the initial part of the hearing, but we were on the floor debating what happened last night and probably will be debating the rest of the day.

I watched, over the 25 years I have been on the Foreign Affairs Committee, the United States and the United Nations and other organizations try to impose our will from the outside on conflicts within a certain area between two or three countries. I just feel kind of bad that the United States is forcing Serbia to accept the independence of Kosovo while Kosovo has always been a part of greater Serbia.

I talked to Serbian leaders, and they have told me that they have no problem with Kosovo having an independent government within the confines of the greater Serbian area, and it concerns me that we are forcing the independence of Kosovo on the Serbians. There is no question that Milosevic did some horrible things and should have been held accountable, and I think that is one of the reasons why the problem exists today.

Nevertheless, my concern is that what we are insisting on, and what we have insisted on, along with NATO and the U.N., is going to lead to further problems down the road.

I do not like to see conflict. I do not like to see war, but you are not going to end it, in my opinion, long-term unless you get the warring parties to sit down and come to some kind of an agreement. We have been trying to externally in the Middle East to solve the Palestinian issue and the issue between Hezbollah, Hamas, and Israel, and we have been doing it for as far back as I can remember, and we have done it without success. We have worked and worked and worked, and we have not reached much of a conclusion.

The killing goes on. It abates for a while, but it goes on and on and on. Until they are willing to sit down and realize that the carnage has to stop, you are not going to stop it. You cannot do it externally, even though the United States, big brother around the world, is trying to get that job done, with the help, in some cases, of the United Nations and NATO.

But here in this area, I am very concerned, and you can make a comment, if you want to, Mr. Secretary, I am very concerned that the unilateral action that has been taking place, making Kosovo independent may not, in the short term, cause military conflict, but I think, in the long term, it is going to continue to be a boil that will end up with more heartache and heartbreak and conflict down the road.

So I think what I am saying is like kind of blowing into a hurricane. I am not sure that what I am saying is going to make much of a difference, but it does concern me, and I think the dye has been cast. But when you talk to the people in Serbia, the leaders—I have talked to the President all the way on down—they say that they had no problem with Kosovars governing themselves within the confines of a greater Serbia, as they have always been, but when they become an independent nation, and you are severing part of the sovereignty of Serbia, you are creating a lot of hostility that I think is going to be a problem down the road.

The other thing is, there have been some severe problems with churches being burned in Kosovo, people being driven out of their homes in Kosovo, tens of thousands have been removed from the places that they have lived and the churches they have attended for a long, long time. This is an issue that has to be addressed if you go ahead, and I presume we will, with the independent Kosovo.

So if the United Nations and NATO and the United States have made this commitment to an independent Kosovo, they had better darned well make sure that the people that are living there that are Serbs and people who have different religious views are not run out of the country, are not tortured, hurt, or destroyed, as it has been in the last few months.

With that, I think you know where I stand. I yield back.

Mr. PRICE. Do you care to respond, Mr. Secretary?

Mr. FRIED. If I could respond, Congressman you are right that the breakup of Yugoslavia was sad—I think you used that word—and, indeed, it was, and the way it broke up was terrible. But it has gone, and Kosovo's independence is part of the breakup of Yugoslavia. Croatia, Slovenia, Bosnia, Montenegro, and Macedonia are now all independent countries, as is Serbia.

Mr. PRICE. May I ask a question since I started the time? Was Kosovo part of greater Serbia before?

Mr. FRIED. Kosovo became part of greater Serbia in 1912, and then Serbia and Kosovo became part of the new Kingdom of Yugoslavia.

Mr. PRICE. I understand. One other question. Serbia, in World War II and World War I, all of the conflicts that have taken place, Serbia has always been an ally of the United States, has it not?

Mr. FRIED. Serbia was an ally in both world wars. That is true.

Mr. PRICE. Okay. Thank you.

Mr. FRIED. That is true. It is also true that after the massive ethnic cleansing, that the Milosevic dictatorship perpetrated against the Kosovo Albanians, after the massive violence, the years of repression, there was no way, in our judgment, that Kosovo would ever be ruled from Belgrade again. I convey this judgment with sadness because the breakup of Yugoslavia was violent and terrible and quite possibly unnecessary, but it was a fact, and it was in this context that we had to make difficult choices.

Congressman, you also mentioned the violence against Serbs, and this is a reference mainly to riots that occurred 4 years ago. These were terrible things, and they need to be addressed.

Since Kosovo's independence, I am happy to report that there has been, so far, no violence and no incidents directed against the Serb communities in Kosovo, no reports of any, and that the violence perpetrated has been perpetrated by Serbs. Now, I cannot say that this situation will remain as it is, but, so far, that is the situation, and I was in Kosovo last Friday.

The Ahtisaari plan, which provides for Kosovo's supervised independence, consists of extensive rights and provisions to enforce those rights for the Serb population of Kosovo, and it is the intention and commitment of the international community, the United States, the European Union, to see those rights are enforced.

The Kosovo Government has accepted the Ahtisaari plan and has already passed laws to implement it, and it is our intention to see

that it is implemented in practice, not just in theory. I can report to you that the Kosovo leaders with whom I met conveyed to me their intention to see that Ahtisaari's provisions, including the rights and privileges for the Serb community in Kosovo, are respected, and I will continue to work with this committee to report to you about how these are implemented in practice, as well as work to see that they are on the ground.

Mr. BURTON. Let me just make one more comment, Mr. Chairman. I have been told, and I presume it is accurate, that there have been additional churches burned and that there have been additional Serbs driven from their homes to find refuge elsewhere. You are saying that this has not happened in the last 4 years.

Mr. FRIED. No. I am not saying that. I am saying that, since independence, I have no reports of violence against Serbs, and when I met with the two Serbian ministers in the new Kosovo Government, they did not report to any such incidents.

There have been problems, and it is one of KFOR's responsibilities to protect the Serb communities. I also said that the violence since independence, the violence that has existed, which has been very limited, has been perpetrated by radicals in the Serbian community.

Mr. PRICE. Unanimous consent, the gentleman have an additional minute.

Mr. BURTON. Let me just say, I have had religious leaders from Kosovo come to see me, members of the Orthodox Church, all the way up to the head of the Orthodox Church, and he has told me, and I do not believe the gentleman is lying—he is a pretty religious leader and a religious man—he has told me that there has been continued violence against their churches, and there has been continued violence against people in many of those areas that have been driven from their homes.

Now, if everything is hunky dory over there, then I do not know why they are coming to my office and telling me that. I hope what you are saying is going to be true. I hope that the violence does stop, but these hatreds go back a long time, and I think it is going to be very difficult for the United States, NATO, the U.N. to be there forever to continue to make sure that peace reigns. Until those two governments, until those two peoples, are willing to sit down with each other and work things out, I do not think you are ever going to solve this problem.

Mr. FRIED. I entirely agree that we have a responsibility to protect the rights of the Serbian community, and we intend to try to do so.

Chairman BERMAN [presiding]. The time of the gentleman has expired. I will yield myself 5 minutes for questions.

As I mentioned in my opening comments, when I was in Kosovo, one could not help but come away with a sense of the dismal lack of an economic situation: Very high unemployment, lack of major work on infrastructure, these kinds of things. I would like you to just speak to the economic-development prospects for Kosovo. What steps can Kosovo take to reduce its significant unemployment to stimulate economic growth? When will it be eligible to apply for IMF and World Bank funding? What assistance will the U.S. pledge at the international donors' conference this summer?

Mr. FRIED. Kosovo's future, as your question rightly suggests, will depend on its economic viability so that people, frankly, have more to do than worry about causes of the past. When people have jobs and prospects, they will start thinking more about the future.

We have long regarded Kosovo's economic development as critical to the security in Kosovo. We are planning, with the European Union and the support of the World Bank, a major donors' conference in June. One of my messages to the Kosovo leadership last week was that they should focus on the economy, and they heartily agreed.

Without a resolution of Kosovo's status, without its independence, they would have been ineligible to join the World Bank and the IMF. Now the way is open for them to do so.

In terms of economic development, there are really three tracks that have to work together.

One is investment from below, as it were. Kosovo and Albanian communities in Europe and in the United States will send money and will invest in the country, and this is already happening.

Secondly, with the resolution of status, there may be some major investment in Kosovo, investment from the top. Kosovo has some serious coal and other mineral reserves.

And the third will be international support. The Congress has already appropriated about 350, close to \$400 million of assistance funds for Kosovo, and the administration may ask for more for future budgets. The Europeans have pledged money.

So between our support for a period of time and investment, we hope to see the Kosovo economy start to get on its feet.

Chairman BERMAN. Thank you. If I could turn to the broader issue of expanded NATO membership, the United States position on membership invitations to Albania, Croatia, and Macedonia at the summit next month in Bucharest; are our allies in NATO likely to support invitations to those countries? What happened at the March 6th meeting of the NATO Foreign Ministers in terms of views on these candidacies? And then if you could briefly describe the weaknesses in each of these countries, addressing challenges: Corruption, weak judicial systems, immature Parliaments, as opposed to our very mature one.

Mr. FRIED. I had the honor of accompanying Secretary Rice to the NATO Foreign Ministers meeting last week, and I can report to you that there is a developing consensus in favor of invitations to all three countries. There is one major issue, which I mentioned in my testimony, which is the issue of Macedonia's name, and we have encouraged Macedonia to work with Greece to resolve this.

Chairman BERMAN. Are the words "work with Greece to resolve this" sort of a boilerplate statement we make, or is there any reason in the world to believe that the two can resolve this?

Mr. FRIED. It is not a boilerplate statement. On Friday night, I was in Skopje and met with the Macedonian leadership and encouraged them to work with Greece and to find a way forward, and, of course, I am in contact with our Greek allies and friends about this.

We are doing what we can to support Ambassador Matt Nimetz, the U.N. negotiator on the name issue. This is not a pro forma process. This is a real one, and I think both governments would

like to find a solution. It is a hard issue for them. It is not a trivial issue. These issues touch on deep emotions in both countries, but we are doing what we can to encourage a solution.

Sir, you mentioned the weaknesses of all three countries, and then you mentioned the salient ones. All three face the same challenges that other post-Communist countries have faced in the early stages of their development—that is, relatively weak institutions of modern governance, relatively immature political systems—but all three have made very rapid and impressive progress. All three have moved very far. Albania has moved a tremendous distance over the past 10 years, as has Macedonia. Croatia was always more developed and, frankly, more wealthy than the other two, but it has also moved a long way.

They have made considerable progress. They have more to do, but, frankly, we have learned a lot about NATO enlargement, and we know that countries, when they come into the alliance, do not stop their reforms; they continue them.

Chairman BERMAN. Thank you very much. My time has expired. I recognize the ranking member, Ms. Ros-Lehtinen.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you so much, Mr. Chairman. Just one question, to follow up on the name issue.

As we know, Greece has been an important NATO ally. It deployed almost 2,000 troops last year combined in Kosovo and Afghanistan. What United States efforts can we undertake to help Greece deal with this 15-year impasse over one of its neighbors to the north that, in its official name, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia?

Greece strongly believes that to recognize its neighbor as the Republic of Macedonia, as the United States did a few years ago, would eventually open the door to claims in that territory in northern Greece, which is also referred to as Macedonia in Greece. What more can we do to help resolve this thorny situation?

Mr. FRIED. It was very much with that in mind that I went to Skopje Friday night and urged the Macedonian leaders to do what they could to find some mutually acceptable way forward, and, of course, I have been in touch, as I said, with my Greek friends about this. Greece is a good NATO ally. We have good relations with both countries, and we very much want to see a resolution.

The issues are difficult, and emotions are high, but we very much hope that a solution can be found which will clear this up, at least sufficiently, before the Bucharest NATO Summit. I do not want to go into the details because we are sometimes in the middle of discussions, as is Matt Nimetz, who is the U.N. special envoy on this issue, and he is very active. He has been to the region a number of times lately. These efforts are ongoing, and we obviously wish them full success.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you, Mr. Secretary. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman BERMAN. The gentleman from California, Mr. Costa, is recognized for 5 minutes. Is your mike on, Jim?

Mr. COSTA. How about that?

Chairman BERMAN. Much better.

Mr. COSTA. Much better. Can my 5 minutes start again?

Chairman BERMAN. Yes.

Mr. COSTA. I would like to focus a little bit about the Serbian Government, based upon your visit last week and your thoughts as to the threats that we hear about. How likely do you think that the Kosovo Serbs are going to cooperate with the Ahtisaari plan, and since it includes provisions, I understand, that includes a constitution, rights to minorities, a justice system, and all of that, how effectively can that be implemented with Serbian participation?

Mr. FRIED. Right now, it is difficult for many of the Serbs in Kosovo, even Serbs who want to, to openly work with the Kosovar Government and with the European Union. Many of them feel themselves under pressure, and sometimes even threat, from radical elements and from elements within the Serbian Government, which is very unfortunate.

The irony, of course, and you suggested it in your question, is that the Ahtisaari plan provides extensive protections for the Serbian community, and these protections can be better realized if they are cooperating.

Mr. COSTA. Do you think this is a time circumstance, that you just need enough time to pass for the pressure to wane and for these folks to take advantage of the plan?

Mr. FRIED. That may be the case, and I hope it is. When I was in Kosovo, I heard that many Serbian community leaders are privately expressing a wish to cooperate, and it may be that, with time, it will be more possible for them to do so.

Mr. COSTA. Based upon their demonstrations that took place—I guess there were damages—I do not know—for your intending to get compensation for them, but do you think that Serbia is going to escalate its response, things like cutting of electricity, I have heard; communications links with Kosovo at earlier than rumored?

Mr. FRIED. I did not visit Belgrade last week, but the Serbian Foreign Minister, Vuk Jeremic, spoke at the U.N. yesterday, and he suggested that Serbia would not impose an embargo on Kosovo. I cannot predict the future, but I do not have any reason to believe that the Serbs will engage in the most kinds of provocative behaviors. That said, Serbia is going into an election cycle.

Mr. COSTA. When is that?

Mr. FRIED. They are going to have Parliamentary elections, I believe, on May 11th. This was just announced earlier this week. So we have to be cautious in predicting the future. The election campaign is about Serbia's future with Europe, and it may be that Serbs will choose a European future rather than a future of self-isolation.

Mr. COSTA. With that comment in mind, we have the Russian calculation to consider, I guess, and is it your sense that the Russian Government now, with the change, although some suspect it is not that much of a change, will respond to Serbia's reaction? Are they going to take the lead from Serbia, or are they going to invoke their own Russian style of branding on these cases, as Putin has already stated?

Mr. FRIED. I hope, we hope, that Russia will play a constructive role and help Serbia accommodate itself to the reality of Kosovo's independence.

Mr. COSTA. Notwithstanding its statements.

Mr. FRIED. But I do not believe it is likely in the short term that they will do so. They have taken a very strong position on this issue.

Mr. COSTA. Do you think they are going to back up their rhetoric with any actions, as they have done with the Ukraine?

Mr. FRIED. I do not think that Russia is in a position directly to put pressure on Kosovo or sanction it. I think that they have, so far, been diplomatically active in attempting to thwart compromises that could move the issue in a constructive direction, and I regret that.

Mr. COSTA. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I yield the balance of my time.

Chairman BERMAN. Thank you, Mr. Costa. The gentleman from New Jersey, Mr. Smith, is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. SMITH OF NEW JERSEY. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate yielding, and welcome, Secretary Fried. Just a couple of questions.

First, the inevitability of Kosovo's independence, I believe, began at Rambouillet. All of us saw that the writing was on the wall that it was a matter of when-and-not-if ending. How it came to be, it seems to me, is all important.

I think our policy, the European policy, in the Balkans over the years, especially going back to the early 1990s, has been feckless, it has been inconsistent. I have held dozens of hearings on the Balkans. I have been there many times. I remember meeting with Milosevic, who, regrettably, caused horrific damage, as we all know, but it seems as if we always seem to get it wrong.

The arms embargo, for example, which Steny Hoyer and I and others thought should have been lifted in order to allow sovereign states to defend themselves, was put into place and locked in, and obsolescence and a lack of capability on the part of Bosnia and Croatia, especially. There has been a cascading series of mistakes made over the years.

I remember meeting with the mayor of Dubrovnik, who pleaded with us to do something. We sat idle with our hands in our pockets—and the appalling genocide in Srebrenica was another example of European and United States understanding of the nature and scope of the problem.

I was there recently in July, and, frankly, when several formerly mass-buried individuals were re-interred, it was a moving ceremony beyond words. It was Holocaust-like to see so many people who had died and the pain that is still etched in the faces of those people.

So there have been many mistakes, which is my point. I raise this because I am concerned about Kosovo now in terms of how this was done. Frankly, we were one of the last ones to recognize Bosnia and Croatia when they declared their independence, and now we are first in the queue, or among the first.

I am concerned, and I have been concerned for 28 years as a Member of Congress, first, about the Kosovar Albanians and the breach of their human rights, which occurred systematically, and now the Serbs in Mitrovica and other places where their human rights have been breached.

I know Bishop Artemije is no longer high on the State Department's people list who are the good guys these days, but, frankly, he has a point. When he brings forward one monastery in one church that has not only been desecrated but leveled to the ground, all while international peacekeepers look on. So I understand their frustration.

Two questions: First, how do we ensure that minority rights truly, in a durable way, are not breached the way they have been breached with impunity over these years? Frankly, I have not gotten a warm and fuzzy over these many years. I have been to all of these places, and it seems like we make one miscalculation after another.

Secondly, as someone who believes strongly in the sanctity of human life across the board and who believes that birth is an event that happens to all of us—it is not the beginning of life—I find it appalling that the draft constitution contains language that would seem to etch into that constitution that life begins at birth and onward and that unborn life is *persona non grata*.

To say that the sanctity of life begins at birth is a European means of writing constitutions which preclude sanctity of life for unborn children, and I wish you would speak to that, and why our Government, especially under the Bush administration, will be aiding and abetting what could be open season on another set of minorities, and, in this case, it would be unborn children, boys and girls.

Chairman BERMAN. The gentleman from New Jersey, Mr. Sires. Did you want to respond? I am sorry.

Mr. FRIED. I am happy to respond.

Chairman BERMAN. I apologize. Of course.

Mr. FRIED. Congressman, I agree entirely that one of the international community's first responsibilities in Kosovo is to see to it that the extensive provisions for protection of Serbian rights that exist now on paper are implemented in practice. That is one of the reasons—in fact, that is the chief reason—that KFOR will remain, that a new international civilian office is being set up now, and that the EU is fielding a rule-of-law mission.

The purpose is to see to it that the rights of the Serbs, as well as other democratic guarantees, are observed in practice. This is going to be a long-term challenge. The new leaders of Kosovo have committed themselves to working with the international community to see that these rights are observed. So far, post-independence, the situation in most of Kosovo is peaceful and stable, but we cannot assume that this will occur automatically, and we take this responsibility very seriously.

With respect to the constitution, we have made clear to Kosovo authorities the position of this administration on the issue of right to life, and we have made clear that this is not something that we are imposing or pressing upon them.

Mr. SMITH OF NEW JERSEY. With all due respect, the Europeans are.

Mr. FRIED. I can speak, though, for what we have informed the Kosovars, and I saw to this myself, aware of this issue. There is much work to do in Kosovo, and we cannot walk away from it, and we take this responsibility seriously.

Chairman BERMAN. The time of the gentleman has expired. The gentleman from New Jersey, Mr. Sires, is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. SIRES. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. First of all, let me thank you for your patience. We have been coming in and out of here for votes. I appreciate the fact that you are still here.

You know, I just have a question. I know that we had a model for Bulgaria and Romania, and they accelerated their political and their economic transformation. Are we applying the same model? How is Kosovo like or different than the efforts that these countries have made after 1989?

Mr. FRIED. Kosovo has basically all of the challenges of post-Communist countries plus it has the additional challenges that it has newly emerged as a nation. So it has got double challenges, which means that our support for Kosovo is going to have to be intense, and it will have to take place over a number of years.

We know something about the challenges and how to overcome the challenges of post-Communist, Democratic transformation. We are a lot smarter than we were in 1989, and we have seen what works, and we have seen what does not work. We are better at helping countries than we were when we started out.

This is going to take time. Kosovo is a very poor country. It suffered 10 years of a very repressive regime, even more repressive than the Communist norm, in the last years of Milosevic, but we have learned a lot from the experiences in Eastern Europe after 1989, and we will apply those lessons as best we can.

Mr. SIRES. Could you give me, like, one of the lessons?

Mr. FRIED. Sure. For example, an economy requires a modernized banking system, normal credit, good money driving out corrupt money. It needs financial regulators. It needs an insurance system. Often we find, quite frankly, that a flat tax works well because, in countries like this, it helps reduce corruption. We have learned how to help countries set up these systems that work, and if an investment regime is created that drives down corruption and drives corruption out, money starts to come in.

There is much more. I could go on, but I am giving you an example.

Mr. SIRES. Thank you very much.

Chairman BERMAN. The gentleman from Texas, Mr. Poe, is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. POE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Mr. Secretary. I have been called a lot of things in my life, but I have never been called a diplomat, so I want to try to get to the chase and have you explain it to me.

I am aware of the situation, aware of the history. I understand all of the turmoil, violence, ethnic problems for years in the area. The United States has taken the position, and I am not necessarily saying—I could disagree—but we have taken the position that Kosovo should be an independent state. What authority does the United States operate under, what policy do we operate under, when we go throughout the world and say that a group of people may be an independent state from another state? Where do we get that authority?

Second question: What is our policy? I know you said we do not set a precedent, but we did set a precedent. We set a precedent in

Kosovo. What is the policy of the United States in making our determination as the super power that a group of people in one part of a country may be independent from that country, and other people in the same situation—Taiwan, Tibet, and China, the problems in Russia—they can not be separate from their country? Can you explain that to me? Since we are the power, the world power, we make the decisions, and the rest of the world seems to follow.

Mr. FRIED. We approached the problem of Kosovo's final status and its independence with a lot of reluctance because, as your question suggests, it is not a good idea to have a default mode of supporting separatism. That is not a good idea, and, as a rule, we do not.

Our decision in Kosovo was based on its unique situation. Yugoslavia fell apart. We did not play a role in that. Yugoslavia fell apart, killed from within.

Mr. POE. Excuse me, Mr. Secretary. My question is not, Why Kosovo? My question is, What is our policy? By what authority do we act? Where do we get the innate authority to say that one people can separate from another? That is the first question.

The second question is broader than Kosovo. It is what is our policy? Now you are telling me our policy is not to encourage independence.

Mr. FRIED. That is true.

Mr. POE. This is an exception to the policy?

Mr. FRIED. Yes. It is very much an exceptional case, and this was a decision we took, frankly, with reluctance but in recognition of reality. You asked about the inherent authority, and my response is the reality on the ground was that Kosovo would never be ruled by Serbia, that it had been administered by the United Nations for 9 years, and that the terms of the U.N. Security Council resolution envisioned independence as a possible final status.

We made this decision after seeking to go through the Security Council of the United Nations, which, frankly, would have been preferable. That was our first choice. When we were blocked, the United States, with our key European allies, not on our own, with our key European allies, came to the conclusion that it would be deeply destabilizing to try to freeze a situation which was not tenable.

So we made the decision. Kosovo declared its independence, and we recognized it.

This is not a rule; it is an exception, and it was an exception based on the unique circumstances of Kosovo.

Mr. POE. So, in a hypothetical case, if another group of people comes to the United States asking that we give them support, our initial answer is going to be no.

Mr. FRIED. Our initial answer will be of great reluctance because Kosovo, in our view, does not constitute a precedent, and we will look with great skepticism at arguments that it does, yes, sir.

Mr. POE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman BERMAN. The time of the gentleman has expired. The gentleman from New York, Mr. Engel, is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. ENGEL. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. You know, I am listening to some of my colleagues who are opposing this, and I am wondering if they were around in 1776, if they would have opposed the

United States breaking away from England. That is the way it kind of sounds to me.

Mr. Secretary, I think you are right on the money. This is a unique situation, and, again, I want to reiterate what I said in my opening remarks. The former Yugoslavia has broken up. It no longer exists, and every other people in the former Yugoslavia were given the right of self-determination, and the people of Kosova deserve nothing less. There is no way, after the genocide conducted against the Albanian majority in Kosova by Milosevic, the Serbian leader, that Pristina and Kosova could ever be governed again by Serbia.

Frankly, I think that the ball is in Serbia's court. Will they keep looking backwards to alliances with Russia and fight wars of 1389 or 1999, or will they look forward and be part of the European Union and be part of the 21st Century? I hope that they will. I hope that leaders like Jadic rise to the top, but you just never know.

For people who talk about monasteries, I know the leadership of the people of Kosova. They are protecting the monasteries. They are very concerned about the monasteries. Minority rights must be protected in Kosova, and, frankly, I think the majority needs to protect Serbs and minority rights. It is unfortunate that the Serbian leadership never protected minority rights in their country, but I think that minority rights need to be protected, and I want to say, Mr. Secretary, I think you are right on the money.

This is not a precedent, and I do not think the United States needs to apologize for anything. We did this in concert with our European allies, as part of the Contact Group. This is the best possibility of all kinds of alternatives. The only other two would be to have a U.N. protectorate forever. That does not work. And the other thing would be having Kosova governed by Serbia again, and that, of course, can never work. So this is the only situation, out of many alternatives.

Let me just ask you a couple of questions. Are you satisfied with the number of countries that have recognized Kosova as an independent state? How many, do you think, are likely to recognize Kosova in the future? What countries are expected to recognize them next?

Mr. FRIED. Congressman, we are satisfied with the number of European countries who have recognized Kosovo, both recognized and expressed their intention to recognize soon. We have two-thirds of the European Union members, which is pretty good for such a short period of time.

We think that recognitions outside of Europe will come in. They are slower, and that is natural because Kosovo is in Europe. It has been a European problem. Europe has been seized with it.

We are encouraging governments outside of Europe to recognize Kosovo. Some have, others will, and we think a steady addition of new recognitions will occur over the next months, and we are satisfied that critical mass has already been reached.

Mr. ENGEL. Thank you. Will United States troops remain in Kosova as part of KFOR, and how many, and how long? I believe that the presence of U.S. troops in KFOR is critical.

Mr. FRIED. The answer is, yes, we will remain as long as we regard our presence as essential to the mission. We have about 1,500 troops. That is about 10 percent of the total of KFOR troops. So it is 90 percent non-U.S., but our troops are very effective, and they are very good on the ground. By the way, they reach out to the Serbian community—I have seen them do it—out in the villages in the south. They know what they are doing, they are good at it, and, as a citizen, I am proud to see them doing the right thing.

Mr. ENGEL. Thank you. Do you think that Serbia wants a European future? Will this be the main issue in the upcoming Serb election in May, or is this a vote about rejecting a European future in favor of still fighting to hold onto Kosova, still clinging to Russia: The past or the future for Serbia?

Mr. FRIED. That may be exactly how the election is fought. Serbia lost Kosovo in 1999, and the question for Serbia is not whether it gets Kosovo back because, frankly, that has gone. The question is whether Serbia realizes its European future, which it deserves, and the only roadblocks in front of Serbia will be those that the Serbs place there themselves.

We will support Serbia on the way to Europe, and, frankly, the way for Kosovo and Serbia to be part of the same political family again is when both of them are in the European Union.

Mr. ENGEL. Thank you. I could not agree with you more, and, again, thank you for your good work.

Chairman BERMAN. The time of the gentleman has expired. The gentleman from Florida, Mr. Bilirakis.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate it.

Mr. Secretary, I know you briefly addressed this while I was voting, the Phyron issue. I would like to make a couple of points, if I can. Greece cannot agree to an ascension that is wholly contrary to the principles of NATO. According to the Membership Action Plan that NATO adopted in 1999, “[p]otential members must first display a willingness to settle international, ethnic, or external territorial disputes by a peaceful means, commitment to the rule of law, and human rights, and a democratic control of armed forces.”

Clearly, Phyron has failed to meet even the first criterion. The addition of Phyron to NATO would undoubtedly enhance the alliance but only if it displays an adherence to the rule of law. How could NATO condone Phyron’s inability to honor international and bilateral agreements with its failure to resolve the name issue in accordance with adherence to the United States policy and a U.N.-brokered agreement that calls for ending negative propaganda against Greece by the Phyron and settling the name issue?

Wouldn’t you agree that that is the wrong way to start off a relationship based on mutual security and stability? In my opinion, it would serve the interests of peace, justice, and stability in the region by not allowing Phyron’s ascension into NATO until a mutually agreed-upon U.N.-sanctioned name has been determined. I want to know, do you agree with that? What is your position on that, and, if not, why not? Thank you.

Mr. FRIED. The United States has supported Macedonia’s efforts to join the transatlantic community. We have supported their re-

forms. We also strongly support the ongoing efforts to reach a mutually satisfactory solution to the name issue.

Congressman, I do not know whether you were here when I mentioned that I was in Skopje Friday night.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. No, I was not.

Mr. FRIED. I visited Skopje, and my message to the leadership was, we want to support you, and we hope that you will work with us and with Greece and with the U.N. negotiator, Matt Nimetz, to find a solution to the name issue.

I also told them the United States would do what it could to help. I encouraged them to work with Greece, and, of course, I have been in touch with our Greek friends and allies on this issue.

Efforts are ongoing, and we hope that this has worked out satisfactorily. It is in everyone's interests for this to be resolved and to be resolved before the NATO summit, so the State Department and I, personally, and others are very much involved in this effort.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Are you encouraged?

Mr. FRIED. I am hopeful that a way forward can be found, with goodwill on both sides. Macedonia is a new country. It is a vulnerable one. Unlike the other countries emerging through Yugoslavia, it avoided civil war. It has got a multi-ethnic government, multi-ethnic coalition, multi-ethnic opposition, too, and we hope both sides can find a way forward together.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Thank you.

Chairman BERMAN. The committee invited our colleague, Melissa Bean, to join the committee for this hearing, and I now recognize her for 5 minutes.

Ms. BEAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, Ranking Member Ros-Lehtinen for holding this hearing and for allowing me to join you today.

Secretary Fried, we have spoken in the past. It is an honor to have an opportunity to talk to you here in committee about the status of Kosovo.

One comment that I will just make briefly, that you made a statement, just a second ago, that Serbia lost Kosovo in 1999. I would just like to point out that that is a different position than the State Department had in 1999, when they said Kosovo would remain part of sovereign Serbia. I understand that it is an evolving position at the State Department, and that is now your position, but that is not what it was at the time.

I am encouraged by your written testimony, to talk about Bosnia and Herzegovina for a second, regarding you were essentially saying that reforms can upgrade but should not supplant Dayton. Is that an official position of the administration, and are actions being taken by the State Department to discourage those in Bosnia who are calling for the abolition of the Republika Srpska?

Mr. FRIED. Yes and yes. It is an official position, and I, personally, have discouraged strongly efforts to abolish the Republika Srpska.

Ms. BEAN. Okay. That is good. The other question I have, to go back to Serbia and their Parliamentary elections, which Congressman Engel asked you about, as you know, prior to recognition on the part of the U.S. of a unilateral declaration, some of us who had returned recently from the area had suggested to the State Depart-

ment that instability could follow such recognition. Certainly, there has been recent fallout within Serbia's Government and Kurstineza's dissolving the Parliament as these Parliamentary elections are coming up.

How concerned is the State Department about the trend toward a more nationalistic government of the future and what that does for the region?

Mr. FRIED. The administration is, of course, concerned that nationalist forces seem intent on using this issue to stage a comeback. We believe that Serbia deserves a European future for itself and its people. We support this. We support Serbia's future in Europe, and we will continue to do so.

Our ability to help them will depend on whether they choose this future for themselves, and it will be up to the people of Serbia.

Ms. BEAN. Thank you. I guess my last area of questioning has to do with Kosovo specifically. You know the delegation that I led in 2007 to Kosovo—while we were there, we visited Srpska—which was an area that was touted as a success of the provisional government in Kosovo allowing returning Serbs to their communities that had been destroyed. When we were there, it was obvious to all in the delegation—in fact, Congressman Chabot was with me there, and I think it was his words that described it essentially as a “Potemkin village” because it was clear that those people were not living there and that this was a sham success story.

In your recent testimony, you have talked about successes in Kosovo over the last 9 years and that there have been some recent swift actions to respect Serb rights in terms of property rights, religious rights, and their ability to return. Are those the kinds of successes we are talking about, or can you give us something more tangible?

Mr. FRIED. First, I am happy to report to you that, so far, at least, the Serbian communities in Kosovo south of the Ibar have not experienced the sort of problems that many feared they would, so that is one piece of good news.

With respect to returnees, specific numbers, rebuilding of homes, rebuilding of churches, I would be glad to provide that information quite specifically so you can have it.

[The information referred to follows:]

WRITTEN RESPONSE RECEIVED FROM THE HONORABLE DANIEL FRIED TO QUESTION
ASKED DURING THE HEARING BY THE HONORABLE MELISSA BEAN

In its declaration of independence the Kosovo Assembly committed to implement all provision provisions of the Ahtisaari Plan, which includes measures to protect the rights, security and culture of Kosovo's non-Albanian communities. Since its declaration, the Assembly has adopted 19 of the 30 pieces of legislation required to implement the Plan and completed a draft constitution that enshrines the Ahtisaari provisions. We anticipate that the constitution will be adopted in April and the remaining legislation passed in the coming weeks. The United States and its European partners are establishing an International Civilian Office in Kosovo to oversee implementation of Ahtisaari.

Before independence, Kosovo authorities made considerable progress on reconstruction of property and religious sites. The Reconstruction and Implementation Commission (RIC) was created in 2005 to direct the reconstruction of 34 Serbian Orthodox religious sites destroyed in the March 2004 riots. The Kosovo Government provides the majority of the funding for RIC (6 million euros), which also receives support from the European Agency for Reconstruction (EAR). The RIC has partially or fully reconstructed 30 of the 34 sites. Construction materials have been stolen from four of the sites and three sites have been vandalized (broken windows and

graffiti). The RIC has enjoyed considerable success since its introduction, but hard-line forces in the church and Serbian government have prevented it from moving forward since independence.

The U.S. Office in Pristina (USOP) is actively engaged in efforts to support Kosovo's Serb community and to preserve and reconstruct cultural heritage sites, including the Church of St. Nicholas (Tutic) in Prizren and the restoration of its iconostasis. The USG recently granted UNESCO \$1 million to towards the restoration of Orthodox churches in Lipjan, Mitrovica, and Stimje, as well as the Budisavci monastery. Overall, the U.S. Government will spend more than \$10 million in assistance to the Kosovo Serb community in 2008. As a result of sustained efforts by USOP, Kosovo Serb customers remain supplied with electricity from the Kosovo Energy Corporation (KEK), even though Serb communities have not paid for KEK-supplied energy over the past eight years.

The number of Serb and other non-majority ethnic groups returning to Kosovo has fallen markedly since the New Year, likely due to uncertainty surrounding Kosovo's status prior to the declaration of independence. However, there were successful returns of non-majority ethnic groups in 2007, particularly in Klina, Istok/Istog, and Pec/Peja, with Serbs comprising 38 percent of the returnees. The attached documents from UNHCR provide a comprehensive picture of returnees since 2000.

On March 12, you mentioned visiting locations in Kosovo that might be showcase villages without any real returnees. USOP has provided us with detailed information about Srpski Babus, a village of Serb returnees. The Kosovo government spent 2.3 million euros for the reconstruction of Srpski Babus, which was destroyed in 1999. USOP reports that 75 homes were rebuilt, along with a health center, school, sewage system, water supply and an electrical network. U.S. members of KFOR, NATO's peacekeeping operation, have made special efforts to ensure security and provide assistance to the 100 and 200 persons now living in the village. Though economic conditions in the Srpski Babus are challenging, the situation may improve as residents will be able to plant crops on time this year. Residents were unable to do so in 2007.

TABLE 1- VOLUNTARY MINORITY RETURNS FROM INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL DISPLACEMENT BY REGION - FIGURES AND PERCENTAGES

Ethnic Group	AOR PEZETEC							AOR PRISTINE/ PRISTINA							AOR GJILANI/ GJILANE							AOR MITROVICA							Total Returns	%	
	Returns 2000	Returns 2001	Returns 2002	Returns 2003	Returns 2004	Returns 2005	Returns 2006	Returns 2007	Total Returns	%	Returns 2000	Returns 2001	Returns 2002	Returns 2003	Returns 2004	Returns 2005	Returns 2006	Returns 2007	Total Returns	%	Returns 2000	Returns 2001	Returns 2002	Returns 2003	Returns 2004	Returns 2005	Returns 2006	Returns 2007			Total Returns
Serbs	407	137	177	128	107	407	376	158	1801	41.52	550	372	324	555	229	89	42	57	2536	43.38	1826	679	965	1559	819	740	614	558	7750	43.22	
Roma	0	0	179	78	83	56	69	52	407	8.11	0	157	116	109	151	119	191	106	348	15.50	20	214	390	237	430	235	303	397	2446	13.64	
Armenians	0	26	362	352	295	254	210	70	1580	34.53	0	452	357	703	242	354	189	162	2489	40.96	0	553	652	1132	593	727	466	308	4991	26.16	
Bosniaks	0	0	69	167	233	119	54	38	670	14.64	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Gorani	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Albanian	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	407	183	687	725	739	646	716	325	4578	98.78	180	169	685	635	477	185	205	404	3149	100.00	201	70	239	239	198	111	78	365	1571	100.00	

NOTE: All presented figures are based on the information collected monthly from the field, received from various and credible sources. Information is updated accordingly. Due to complexity of information gathering, this set of information does not necessarily reflect all return movements at the time of reporting.

Please note that relatively large proportion of Serb returns (each year and for the reporting period) are not to areas requiring significant interaction w/ Albanian communities. Overwhelming majority of Serb returns have been to all-Serb communities of varying sizes, where minimal communication with neighboring communities occurs. The Communities include villages (Gropa, Priluge and Veilka Hoca), relatively large communities (Grazanica, Lajla Selo, Caplavica, Gorazdevac) and municipality of Stjepa.

Minority Return Tables include persons who have received support from International Community, those who have returned hoping to receive such support, as well as those who have not received any assistance.

U.S. Mission in Kosovo

Assistance to Kosovo's Serb Community



March 2008

The U.S. government, represented both by the U.S. Office in Pristina (USOP) and the presence of U.S. military forces in Kosovo (U.S. KFOR), supports the Kosovo Serb community in a variety of ways and is deeply committed to its sustainability. This summary is intended to give a broad description of U.S. government efforts on behalf of Kosovo's Serb community. It is by no means an exhaustive list, nor does it address USG assistance to Serbs living outside Kosovo.

Advocacy

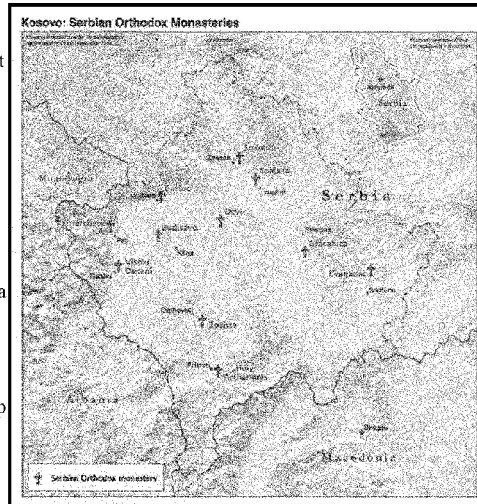
The U.S. Office in Pristina, together with our international partners, is engaged on a daily basis with Kosovo Serb leaders and the Kosovo government at all levels to promote the interests of the Kosovo Serb community. Strong and ongoing USOP advocacy and support helped achieve the following:

- The Kosovo government has enacted laws making Serbian an official language in Kosovo and has incorporated other important rights and protections in key legislation.
- The Assembly of Kosovo voted nearly unanimously to implement the provisions of the Ahtisaari Plan, which contains numerous elements aimed at ensuring the long-term viability of the Kosovo Serb community. Chief among them is the creation of new Serb-majority municipalities, in which Serbs will have control of their local police force, hospitals and schools.
- The Plan also prohibits commercial development in 47 Special Protective Zones (SPZs) created specifically to safeguard Serb cultural heritage in Kosovo, including the areas surrounding the world-famous Visoki Dečani Monastery, the Peć Patriarchate, and the Serb monument to the 1389 Battle of Kosovo. The Kosovo government recently issued an administrative order banning development in these zones and took action to stop construction already underway.
- The Kosovo Police Service (KPS) has issued standard operating procedures (SOPs) for police operations in Serb and other minority areas. These require the participation of Serb police officers in Serb areas and the approval of UNMIK (UN Mission in Kosovo) international police authorities before any such operations are initiated. The KPS has also committed itself to protecting church reconstruction sites, some of which have been the object of theft in recent months.
- Kosovo Serb customers remain supplied with electricity by the Kosovo Energy Corporation (KEK) even though Serb communities have not paid for KEK-supplied energy over the last eight years; these communities were also specifically exempted from recent disconnection policies aimed at improving collection from non-paying customers.
- Prime Minister Thaci has appointed two Kosovo Serbs to his cabinet. One has been placed at the head of the sensitive Labor and Social Welfare Ministry and the other has the Communities and Returns portfolio. In addition, in February 2008, the Prime Minister announced the creation of the Prime Minister's Office of Communities that would resolve problems and provide assistance to Kosovo's non-Albanian communities, primarily Kosovo Serbs.

Individual Cases

USOP has worked directly with local and central Kosovo authorities to ensure that property and other rights of Serb community members are fully respected. Some examples of successful USOP engagement:

- Local governments have modified development plans that impact the areas near the holiest and most important Serbian Orthodox Church (SOC) sites, including the Visoki Dečani Monastery and the Peć Patriarchate.
- In Dečani, the government delayed a new road project that would have affected the area around the Visoki Dečani Monastery. In Peć, the municipal government allowed the Peć Patriarchate to build a wall around its property and help safeguard the site.
- Recent construction of a commercial building within the Special Protective Zone of the Gazimestan battlefield monument (which commemorates the 1389 Battle of Kosovo Polje) has stopped. The central government has promised to remove this structure in its entirety and restore the land to its former state.
- This year, an elderly Serb resident of Pristina received prompt medical and legal assistance after she was assaulted by an ethnic Albanian neighbor. The assailant was convicted and is currently in prison, while the central government has agreed to pay for relocation of the victim, at her request, to a more comfortable and secure environment in Gračanica.
- In a number of high-profile cases in the eastern Kosovo town of Klina, Kosovo Serb property claimants have been able to return to their residences after the Kosovo Property Agency (KPA) ruled in their favor and the Kosovo Police Service enforced these decisions. Specific USOP intercession in the case of Aleksandar Radosavljević and his family, among many others, allowed them to move back to Klina to property previously occupied by municipal authorities.



Preservation of Serb Cultural Heritage

USOP has been actively engaged in efforts to preserve and reconstruct Serbian Orthodox churches and monasteries in Kosovo, as well as other important cultural sites.

The **Reconstruction Implementation Commission, or RIC**, was created to direct the reconstruction of 34 Serbian Orthodox religious sites destroyed in the March 2004 riots. The RIC was formed in 2005 with participation from the Serbian Orthodox Church, the Serbian Ministry of Culture, and the Kosovo Ministry of Culture, as well as the Council of Europe. RIC funding comes mainly from the Kosovo government, which has allocated 6 million euro (8.82 million USD) to the RIC since 2004. Of 35 churches slated for reconstruction work, the RIC has partially or fully reconstructed 30 sites, and is scheduled to finish major reconstruction by the end of 2008. USOP has been a strong supporter of the RIC and has frequently advocated on behalf of this process. **It is worth noting that the RIC is the most successful example of ongoing cooperation between the Serbian and Kosovo governments, as well as the Serbian Orthodox Church.**

The U.S. government has donated \$1 million to UNESCO for the restoration and preservation of several cultural heritage sites in Kosovo, including four Serbian Orthodox sites: the Church of the Presentation of the Virgin in Lipljan, the St. Sava Church in Mitrovica, the Church of St. Archangel Michael in Štimlje, and the Budisavci Monastery in Klina. Work is underway on these projects.

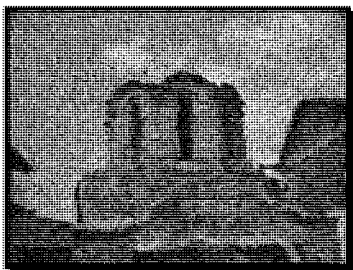
In addition to overall preservation efforts, USOP's Public Diplomacy section has directly funded two projects to aid in the reconstruction of Serbian Orthodox churches in Kosovo:

2004: \$31,000 to repair the **Church of St. Nicholas (Tutic) in Prizren**. This was to augment a project done by the Council of Europe.

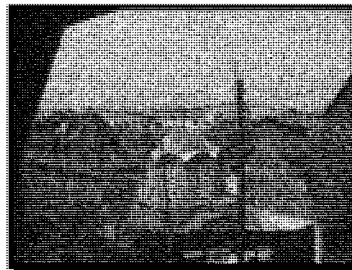
2007: \$65,000 to rebuild the iconostasis of the **Church of St. Nicolas in Pristina**, which was burned in the March 2004 riots. This represents roughly 50% of the total cost to re-make the piece, and is provided jointly by USOP and the U.S. Embassy in Belgrade.

The Church of St. Nicholas (Tutic) in Prizren

(Before Restoration)



(After Restoration)



March 2008

Support for Kosovo Serb Media and Public Outreach to Serb Communities

USOP meets with Serb media outlets in Kosovo on a frequent basis, giving interviews and background information. Both USOP's Public Diplomacy Section and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) mission in Kosovo have directly supported the growth and sustainability of local Serb media in Kosovo with a variety of grants. While a number of programs have been ongoing for several years, specific projects in the last year to highlight are:

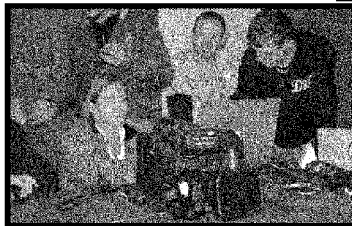
- **Čaglavica Media Center:** A USOP grant, in conjunction with funds from the United Nations, helped found the Center, which is the only venue where Kosovo's Serb journalists can interview leaders from the other communities. USOP provided \$15,320 to finance press conferences at the Čaglavica Media Center, which is located immediately outside Pristina in a Serb-majority area. The Center received a subsequent grant of \$22,727 in the fall of 2007 for pre-election roundtables.



Public debate on the work of the Kosovo Ministry for Returns and Communities held at the Čaglavica Media Center on October 16, 2007

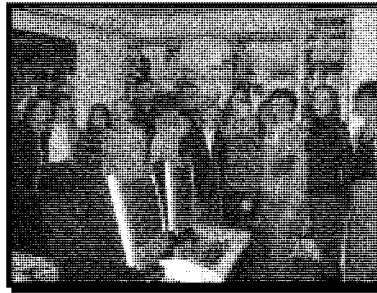
- **Radio KiM (Čaglavica) and Radio Gračanica:** Both of these local outlets provide important media service to their surrounding Serb communities in central Kosovo. Radio Čaglavica recently received \$75,840 to cover an entire year's operating costs, while Radio Gračanica received \$3,180 for a series of radio shows focusing on Serb returnees.
- **USAID support:** The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) has spent \$400,000 in support of Serb media in 2007, including training for journalists, grants for documentaries, etc. For many participants, USAID programs are the first opportunity to undertake such work.

Three local Serb language TV stations: TV Most -Mitrovica, TV Plus, Šilovo (Gnjilane) and TV Herc, Štrpce, are working with their colleagues at local Albanian language TV stations to produce documentaries and news content of common interest.



Over 70 Serb journalists have taken part in media seminars and hands on training organized by USAID.

- **USAID** is also sponsoring a comprehensive **audience survey for Kosovo Serb media**, which will provide a more complete picture of their media environment and allow them to better reach the Kosovo Serb public.
- USOP's Public Diplomacy Section supports a **variety of outreach programs that benefit Kosovo Serbs**. USOP provided a \$50,000 grant in 2006 (and an additional \$10,000 in 2007) to furnish and equip an "American Corner", with English-language reading and resource materials, at the library in the Serb area of northern Mitrovica. This library was totally reconstructed by USAID in 2007 at a cost of \$130,000. In addition, USOP-sponsored **English Language Fellows** teach weekly English classes to Serb youth and young adults in Mitrovica, Gračanica, and other locations.



The USOP English Language Fellow with her students in Mitrovica

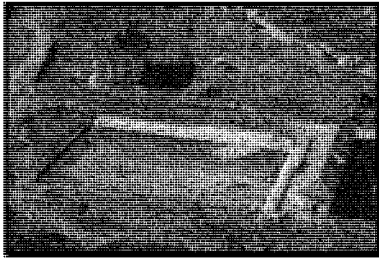
A few examples of how U.S. KFOR has assisted Serb communities include:

- In June 2007, U.S. KFOR helped welcome home 73 Serb families returning to the rebuilt village of **Babuš** (Uroševac municipality). U.S. KFOR maintains direct and frequent contact with village leaders, local NGOs, and the municipal government, helping to facilitate the long-term viability of these returns and ease the transition for returnees. American troops contributed their own time and money for tools to help villagers replant crops.



In Babuš, 73 returned families were greeted by Kosovo government officials and U.S. KFOR personnel upon returning to their homes.

- In **Parteš** (Gnjilane municipality) in October 2007, U.S. KFOR utilized \$160,000 in U.S. Department of Defense funding to construct a brand new community center building and playing field for use by youth and other vulnerable community members. USAID provided another \$50,000 for computer equipment and training classes. Both U.S. KFOR and USAID worked in close coordination with local Serb leaders to identify this community's priority needs.

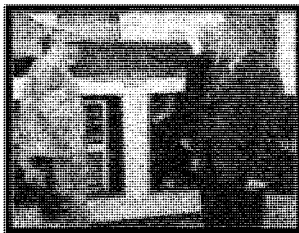


Parteš Community Center

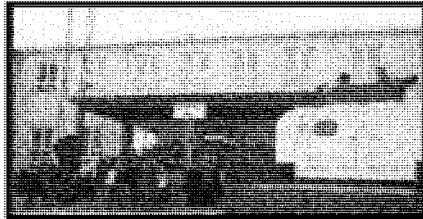


Opening Ceremony with Parteš villagers

- Similar U.S. KFOR community liaison initiatives have been undertaken in many other Serb areas; in only a few small examples, U.S. KFOR provided generators to an elementary school in the Serb municipality of **Štrpce** and to a clinic in a Serb village near **Gnjilane**, creating immense goodwill with locals.

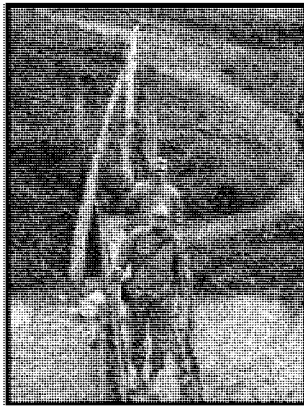


U.S. KFOR soldier demonstrates operation of a new generator provided to a Štrpce elementary school.

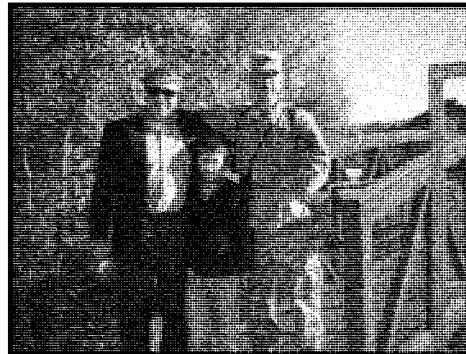


Štrpce elementary school students cheer U.S. KFOR's donation of a much needed generator.

- U.S. KFOR has built and improved roads and bridges in Serb areas, including in **Ranilug**, **Tirince**, and other villages scattered throughout its area of responsibility.



Bridge in Koretin village prior to U.S. KFOR improvement.



LTC Eric Barr, Deputy Commander for Civil Military Operations, Multi-National Task Force (E), with local representatives from Koretin village in front of U.S. KFOR constructed bridge.

- U.S. KFOR provides expert medical and veterinary assistance on a recurring basis to Serb communities through its **MEDCAP** and **VETCAP** exercises.

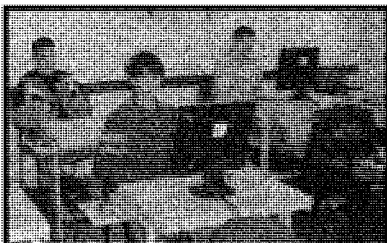
Medical services provided by U.S. KFOR soldiers**Veterinary services provided by U.S. KFOR soldiers****Assistance from the U.S. Agency for International Development**

USAID assistance and support for Kosovo Serbs is extensive, and a full accounting would take many pages to detail. **Through 2006, USAID helped Kosovo Serbs with a variety of development programs totaling \$8.8 million, with an additional \$4.8 million of assistance in 2007.** USAID has executed hundreds of projects, most of which target infrastructure (roads, schools, clinics, hospitals, etc.), but which also include small business development, education, and media projects (some of these are described above). USAID projects are aimed at enhancing the sustainability of Kosovo Serb communities and encouraging Serbs to see their long-term future in a secure and democratic Kosovo.

The following are just a few illustrative examples of the projects supported by USAID in Serb areas:

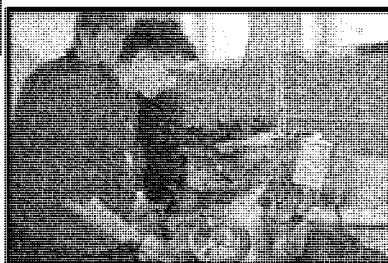
- High unemployment is a critical problem in Kosovo. This year alone, **3300 young Kosovo Serbs participated in USAID school programs**, while USAID also provided Kosovo Serbs with scholarships to the American University of Kosovo (AUK). Around 2,600 Kosovo Serb students have benefited from school curricula and educational materials provided by USAID.





Students of the Mitrovica technical secondary school are gaining practical knowledge at a workshop recently rehabilitated and equipped by USAID. By providing small grants, USAID is supporting student initiatives including the establishment of science workstations, bio-chemistry labs, vocational workshops (machinery and crafts), English language labs, and school computer and internet centers. These grants have benefited 2,673 Kosovo Serb students.

Students in Kosovo frequently identify language and computer skills as key to helping them chart their futures in Kosovo and Europe. USAID is undertaking a program to bring advanced instruction and technology to Kosovo Serb youth. Facilities, materials, and instruction in English and computers has been deployed to three schools and one community center in the Serb areas of Verbovac, Štrpce, Leplje Selo, and Parteš.



- USAID has concentrated on encouraging business endeavors that will enhance employment opportunities and strengthen local markets. In the Serb-majority municipality of **Štrpce**, USAID funded the construction of a freezing facility that will enable local berry and mushroom pickers to export their products throughout Europe and get a better market price.
- In the northern Serb-majority municipality of **Zubin Potok** alone over the last few years, USAID has rehabilitated the town's school, renovated its cultural center, repaired sidewalks and streetlamps, and built a health clinic in the outlying village of Zupče, assistance **totaling approximately \$1.5 million**.



(Before and After Pictures of Cultural Center in Zubin Potok)

- Again aiming to benefit the largest number of local residents possible, USAID rehabilitated an urban road in the Serb-majority municipality of **Leposavić**, located on a steep hillside that had not been repaired or paved in over 40 years. Hundreds of residents, earlier forced to traverse a treacherous stretch of road leading from the city center to their village, now enjoy full access as a result of this project.
- Water supply for rural villages is a pressing issue in Kosovo. In **Zvečan** municipality, two villages received new water distribution systems in 2007, adding to the long list of Kosovo Serb areas that have benefited from such USAID infrastructure projects.



Ljubomir Neskočić, community representative, helps his nephew hold a tray during the inaugural ceremony of the Water System Rehabilitation project in Rudare, Zvečan municipality.



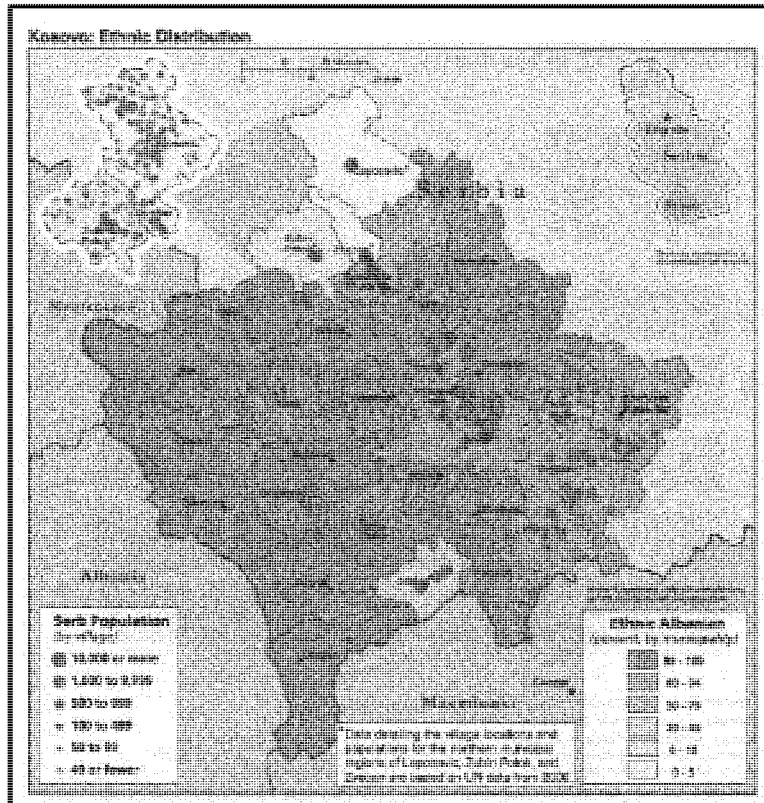
A reliable water system was a key priority identified by the 400 Kosovo Serbs of Brestovik village, a recent return site for over 70 families. In order to meet the daily water needs of the community, USAID cooperated with the ethnic-Albanian majority municipality to construct a water reservoir.

Helping Serbs Return to Kosovo

Helping Serbs return to Kosovo is an important U.S. objective. Lobbying for the property rights of Kosovo Serbs, improving infrastructure and education in Serb areas, and encouraging Kosovo authorities to devote funds and resources to refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) are all designed to create an environment conducive to Serb return.

The U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Population, Migration, and Refugees (PRM) has aided the return of approximately 6,000 Kosovo Serbs to their homes since 2003, **in practically all areas of Kosovo, including** Gnjilane, Kamenica, Priština, Lipljan, Peć, Prizren, Klina, Istok, Novo Brdo, Kosovo Polje, Obilić, Uroševac, and Vitina. PRM assistance ranges from home reconstruction to economic projects aimed at sustainability of returns, as well as promoting inter-ethnic dialogue with local Albanian neighbors.

In addition to these programs in Kosovo, PRM has funded a variety of regionally-based return efforts, including providing \$12.8 million to UNHCR's Balkans program, more than \$3 million to NGO projects aimed at assisting refugees and internally displaced persons in Southeast Europe, and millions more to the International Committee of the Red Cross to resolve outstanding missing persons cases in the region.



Kosovo Government Support for Returns. USOP has consistently pressed for Kosovo authorities to devote significant resources and funding to returnee areas.

The Kosovo Government is the largest individual donor to the returns process. Overall, Kosovo's government has spent 41.7 million euro (61.3 million USD) since 2003 in support of return efforts in all areas of Kosovo, including notable projects in Babljak, Babuš, Orahovac, and Klina. Prior to 2005, all government spending in Kosovo was allocated through the U.N. Mission to Kosovo (UNMIK). Since 2005, when Kosovo gained a greater measure of control over its own governance, the following amounts have been spent on returns:

March 2008

Kosovo Government Funding of Returns:

- 2005 – 8.2 million euro (12.05 million USD)
- 2006 – 10.3 million euro (15.14 million USD)
- 2007 – 5.2 million euro (7.64 million USD)
- 2008 – (planned) 5.77 million euro (8.48 million USD)

Kosovo government support for returns goes beyond building new homes for returning Serbs. In January 2007, the government assumed responsibility for humanitarian transport from UNMIK and now manages train and bus service for many Serbs living in more isolated rural enclaves. The Kosovo Ministry of Transport funded humanitarian transportation services for 2007 in the amount of 2.675 million euro (3.93 million USD). Each month, the bus service transports approximately 28,000 Serb passengers from smaller villages to larger Serb-majority areas so they can receive medical care, shop for essential items, obtain government services, and visit friends and relatives.



Newly rebuilt Serb homes in Babuš



Returnee Serb villagers greet their Albanian neighbors in Brestovik (Kosovo Government funded project)

Mr. FRIED. There have been a number of returnees. There have been a number of reconstructions. There have been problems, and continue to be problems. Now, many of the ethnic Serb authorities in Kosovo are refusing to work with the Kosovo Government and with the international community generally, but we are committed to see to it that the Serbian community in Kosovo is protected and that it prospers.

You may not have been here, but when I was in Kosovo, I met with Serbian community leaders, including the two ministers in the Kosovo Government, now who made it clear that they want their community to remain in Kosovo and prosper, and they are very interested in developmental assistance, and we are going to help them.

Ms. BEAN. Have you visited areas where returning Serbs, not those who have been there forever but those who had to return to areas that were destroyed, are feeling safe yourself, or are we relying on the same kind of, you know, villages that we were told were successes in the past?

Mr. FRIED. I visited Serbian communities, both south and north of the Ibar. I visited Serbian cultural sites, like the Decami Monastery. Our mission in Pristina is in regular contact with the Serbian community.

So, yes, our diplomats are in constant touch with the Serb community all of the time.

Ms. BEAN. I am encouraged by your visits and your testimony. I am just hoping that we are sensitive in how we communicate with those Serbs who are, understandably, concerned about their future, many of whom had KFOR protection in the past, and, at that time, when the monasteries were destroyed, many lives were taken at the same time. So they have a lesser confidence maybe than some in their safety and in their future there. So I appreciate your commitment to staying on top of that. Thank you.

Chairman BERMAN. The time of the gentlelady has expired. The gentleman from California, Mr. Rohrabacher, is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. First and foremost, I would like to congratulate Secretary Fried for the great work that he has done on this very difficult issue. At the end of his life, he will look back, and I know he will see this as one of the great accomplishments of his career, and you deserve great congratulations for the job well done.

Over the years, I would like to mention that Tom Lantos, the chairman of this committee, played such a significant role in bringing about this, what I consider to be a very positive, historic move. Eliot Engel, Steny Hoyer, and myself have been very active in this issue for a decade. So thank you for your good work, and we are proud to have worked with you.

It is, of course, now up to the Kosovars, and the success of this new country will be determined, by and large, and I think you agree with this, Mr. Fried, that if the Kosovars are able to protect the rights and respect the rights of their Serbian minority, Kosovo will be a success, but that depends on them.

If the Kosovars, instead, are drawn back into revenge and some kind of hateful remembrance of the past, and there are many sins

that were committed on both sides, but many sins committed by Serbians against Kosovars in the past, if those sins are not forgiven, and people do not move on, and there is some attempt at revenge, Kosovo will not succeed as a nation.

So it is hard to convince people of things like this, but I hope that we remain a presence and a force for moving forward instead of looking back. I am sure, knowing you, Secretary Fried, that that is exactly what we will be doing.

One of the lies, I would suggest, that is being spread now to try to cast doubt on whether or not Kosovo will be able to succeed because of a commitment to freedom is that there have been attacks on Christian churches, and it seems that the Serbian propagandists are continually labeling the Kosovars as radical Islamists who are anti-Christian when is it not, in fact, true that the Catholic Church—we had the leader of the Catholic Church from Kosovo right here telling us Roman Catholics do not have any problem, and that, instead, the attacks on churches have been basically ethnic and not religious related in the past, and that is not to say that we are not totally committed to no attacks on anybody's mosque or anybody's church, whether it be a Roman Catholic or an Orthodox Catholic.

Mr. FRIED. You are correct that attacks on churches and attacks, whether based on religious or ethnic hatred, are all equally unacceptable and must be prevented, and we have a commitment to do so.

In fact, the attacks have been ethnic based, not religious based, and Kosovo is a particularly inhospitable climate for radical Jihadists to flourish. The Kosovo population is pro-American, pro-Western, rather secular in outlook, and they look to Europe as their future and to the United States as their friend.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Kosovo can be an example to the Muslim world that democracy in the West and Islam can actually work together in harmony rather than being at each other's throats. Is that not the case?

Mr. FRIED. There are several such examples. This is one of them, yes, sir, or can be one of them.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. One last note, and that is, I would like to read something to you, and there may be a little disagreement that we have had, and that is, I would like to read to you, to answer an earlier question: "Within the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another and to assume among the powers of the earth the separate-and-equal station to which the laws of nature and nature's God entitle them, a decent respect for the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes that impel them."

Well, of course, that is from the Declaration of Independence. Let me note, I happen to believe that people have a right to self-determination. I am sorry that our State Department, our Government, finds it difficult to try to base support for the people of Kosovo and others on this notion that people have a right to self-determination.

I do believe that we have expressed a double-standard, whether we are dealing with the Russians or dealing with others who may have understood, if we did, indeed, just say, "People have a right,

through the ballot box, to determine whether they want to be part of another country or not." People would say, "Would you accept, then, if San Diego decided to vote to be part of Mexico?" And I would say, "If the majority of the people in San Diego vote to be part of Mexico, it is adios, San Diego."

But the fact is that this, in the long term, will create more stability for the world rather than trying to create a situation where large numbers of people in various parts of the world are feeling repressed and compelled to be part of a country that they do not want to be part of.

So the Kosovars do have a right to be independent by our basic principles. I do not think we should have a double standard. I think we should understand that, and we should support people's right through the ballot box. I think it would be a more peaceful world if we did that.

Chairman BERMAN. The time of the gentleman has expired, and I will refrain from giving quotes from anything that Abe Lincoln ever said on this subject. The gentleman from Ohio, Mr. Chabot. It is 12:30, and we do have a need to get out of here pretty soon, so, hopefully, for our remaining questions, you will keep that in mind.

Mr. CHABOT. Thank you. Many of my concerns have already been expressed by others on the committee, so I will not repeat them. I would note that I generally find myself much more closely in tune with the gentleman from California, Mr. Rohrabacher, than I do with the Russians, typically, in this committee.

This is one instance when I find there are, I think, good arguments to be made on both sides, but let me tell you what some of my concerns are, and that is the U.N. Security Council Resolution 1244, obviously, is inconsistent with the unilateral decision to break away, which has been supported by our Government, by the United States, and many of the Europeans as well, the concern being, obviously, that there are other similar situations around the world where groups would like to separate from countries where they find themselves a part of those countries, and does this set a precedent? Is this going to stir up more trouble around the world in other areas?

That, obviously, has to be a chief concern. Would you like to comment on that, Mr. Fried, before I go on any further?

Mr. FRIED. I will answer both questions. First, we do not believe that U.N. Security Resolution 1244 precluded independence. We looked at this, so did the Europeans, and we concluded, legally, that 1244 did not preclude independence, that it outlined a process for the temporary administration of Kosovo, and opened the way to a process to determine final status.

It would have been preferable, as I said earlier, to have a new U.N. Security Council resolution, but when it became clear that Russia would block it, we felt we had to act, and we and our main European allies did so.

With respect to precedent, well, there is the Declaration of Independence, and there are various things that President Lincoln said. I will not go into that historical argument, but we do not regard Kosovo's independence as precedent. We believe that the circumstances in Kosovo were unique and that the solution in Kosovo

is not mechanically applicable, no matter what other claims may be.

We can assert that. Other people may assert other things, but, given the choices we had, staying where we were in Kosovo was impossible, going back was impossible. We had to go forward. We recognize the risks. We are prepared to remain committed to mitigate those risks, and our initial experience with the independent Kosovo Government suggests that they understand their own responsibilities to do the right thing now and in the future.

Mr. CHABOT. Is there concern that, for example, say, the Republika Srpska, there could be danger of a similar situation there vis-à-vis Bosnia-Herzegovina?

Mr. FRIED. There are two dangers we see in Bosnia. One is that the Republika Srpska would seek to break the basic Dayton formula by attempting secession. We would resolutely oppose that, and we have told the leaders of the Republika Srpska.

The other danger is that, from the other side, some would seek to abolish the Republika Srpska altogether.

Our message to the Serbian leadership and all of the leadership of the Republika Srpska is that we hope to see Bosnia, both the Bosniak-Croat Federation and the Republika Srpska, all moving forward to Europe, all together, with Dayton improved upon and made more functional, but intact, and that we will not support, and we will resolutely impose, in fact, either extreme, and that has been our consistent message, and it will continue to be.

Mr. CHABOT. Do I have any time left, Mr. Chairman, or are we about out of it? Can I have 1 additional minute just to make a point? Thank you.

One of the other concerns, obviously, is the protection of minority religious rights, including protection of churches, monasteries, synagogues, mosques, whatever they might be, anywhere in the world where there are attacks on those types of facilities is just unacceptable, and I saw many photographs of churches which had been destroyed or terribly damaged, and it is absolutely, I think, the responsibility of the world to make sure those types of things do not happen, and I certainly hope that this committee and others will monitor to make sure that people are protected, given the circumstances now, which I find very disturbing, the way this all came about. I yield back the balance of my time.

Chairman BERMAN. The gentleman's time has expired, and I recognize the gentleman from South Carolina, Mr. Inglis, for 5 minutes.

Mr. INGLIS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Assistant Secretary, it is sort of an interesting question to follow up on Daniel Rohrabacher's questions about stability. We may have been discussing this earlier. Are we really watching sort of the disintegration of the nation-state concept? Maybe you have already answered this or tried to enunciate the principles.

I do not want to sound critical in the question; it is just I am wondering how far do we support disintegration, if that is where we are headed, and is it more stable, or is a nation-state where people resolve their differences within the conflicts between ethnic groups within a nation-state more stable than having separate eth-

nically identified groups with borders that become hot wars? Which is more stable, in your view?

Mr. FRIED. You have asked profound questions. If I attempted to give you a simple, mechanistic answer, I would get it way wrong.

There are principles of self-determination, but if that principle is pushed to an extreme, without common sense, you risk disintegration. There are principles, and good principles, that nations that are multi-ethnic and allow for the rights of many peoples are apt to be more stable.

The situation in Kosovo resulted from the breakup of a multinational state, which was murdered from within by nationalism. We could no more have kept Kosovo bound to Serbia after the experience of the Yugoslav civil wars than we could recreate Austria, Hungary, or the Ottoman Empire. It was gone. It was over, and we had to deal with that fact.

As a general rule, and I want to be responsive to the question because it is a serious one, we tend not to support separatist claims. We tend to support efforts by countries to work out ethnic differences in accordance with the rule of law, human rights, and respect for national minorities. That is why the breakup of Yugoslavia was hard for many of us and why Kosovo independence was not an easy call to make, but it was, in our judgment, the right and the only call to make. But it is not a precedent that should be mechanically applied.

I could go on. This is a deep question, but I have tried to give you the outlines of an answer.

Mr. INGLIS. I think it is a good answer because I do not think we will, in 5 minutes here, find an answer that would cover every situation.

It is of concern when you consider losing some parts of London, for example, to declared Sharia law, applicable in various sections of London. It seems that there we would oppose self-determination and say, "You need to live within the British system, and you cannot have a separate state operating within that state, especially one so different."

But that is an extreme example of what we are talking about here, I would assume, would be your response to that.

Mr. FRIED. Of course, we support the position that the rule of law should apply to the citizens and the residents of the state in which they live.

Mr. INGLIS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I yield back.

Chairman BERMAN. I thank the gentleman. Because of the time, I am going to refrain from getting into the one issue I was hoping to have a chance to—back, the question of Ukraine, Georgia, and NATO into my questions here, but I think this is something that is worthy of a little more attention than at the last second.

So if it is all right with the ranking member, I will thank you, Assistant Secretary, for your testimony and all of your great work, and adjourn the hearing.

[Whereupon, at 12:37 p.m., the committee was adjourned.]

A P P E N D I X

MATERIAL SUBMITTED FOR THE HEARING RECORD

PREPARED STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE GENE GREEN, A REPRESENTATIVE IN
CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF TEXAS

Mr. Chairman, I'd like to thank you for holding this hearing.

This is an important and delicate political issue and I look forward to the insight from our witness, Assistant Secretary Fried.

For eight years, the United States, European Union, and the United Nations have all grappled with how to deal with Kosovo's status.

In 2006, the United Nations acknowledged that the situation in Kosovo was unsustainable and Martti Ahtissari, the U.N. Special Envoy leading status talks, created the Ahtisaari Plan.

This plan would establish a comprehensive status settlement that called for Kosovo's independence from Serbia with ongoing international supervision and extensive guarantees for Kosovo's Serbian population.

Russia blocked all attempts by the United States and several Western countries to have the U.N. Security Council adopt this resolution.

However, on February 17, 2008, the Kosovo assembly adopted a declaration of independence in full accordance with the recommendations of Mr. Ahtissari's plan.

Russia along with other countries in the Balkan region such as Cyprus, Romania, and Slovakia have already said that they will not recognize Kosovo's independence.

Other important U.S. allies like Greece have not decided whether they will recognize Kosovo's independence.

Therefore, Mr. Secretary, I would like to hear your views on how we should diplomatically deal with Russia—especially given their importance in the United Nations and how we should aim to not alienate our other allies who may not agree with us as we move forward on this issue.

Serbia is dealing with its own political factions, and it is unclear how or if they will act on this issue outside of publicly decrying it.

I am interested to know your thoughts on this as well and how this potential instability in the Balkan region will play into NATO enlargement of the "Adriatic Three" and the situation in Bosnia.

The United States has always had one objective in the Balkan region: to integrate this region into Euro-Atlantic institutions and facilitate peaceful, stable democracies.

This mission will prove difficult as violent ethnic nationalism continues to threaten any prospects of peace in the region.

I think that the United States needs to be extra diligent on these issues and work closely with the international community.

Again, Mr. Secretary, I look forward to hearing from you on these issues, and thank you again, Mr. Chairman, for holding this timely hearing.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE SHEILA JACKSON LEE, A REPRESENTATIVE
IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF TEXAS

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for convening today's important hearing. Kosovo's recent declaration of independence for Serbia has the potential to be yet another divisive chapter in the turbulent history of the Balkan region, and I thank you for focusing our attention on this very important issue today. Let me also take this oppor-

tunity to thank the Committee's Ranking Member, and to welcome our distinguished witness, the Honorable Daniel Fried, Assistant Secretary, Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, U.S. Department of State. I look forward to your informative testimony.

On February 17, 2008, Kosovo declared itself an independent and sovereign state. Though Kosovo had officially been a southern province of Serbia, its status had been in limbo since NATO military action in Serbia in 1999. While UN Security Council Resolution 1244, passed in June 1999, officially reaffirmed the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the then-Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, in reality Serbia no longer played any role in the administration of Kosovo.

Though Kosovo's status quo, under which the U.N. Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) retained ultimate political authority in the province, was clearly unsustainable, the question of Kosovo's final status has been delayed over the past several years. The February 17th declaration came after the failure of attempts to secure an international consensus on Kosovo's status. The decision was celebrated on the streets of Kosovo, and has been recognized by over 20 countries, including the United States, Britain, France, Germany, and Turkey; however, it has been vehemently opposed by Serbia and Russia.

Mr. Chairman, Kosovo has seen centuries of tension between an ethnic Albanian majority and a minority Serbian population. Though named an autonomous province by the 1974 Yugoslav constitution, the current status of Kosovo has been brought into question by the 1989 revocation of this autonomy by former Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic, as well as the subsequent dissolution of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. A recent plan, presented to the United Nations by former Finnish President Martti Ahtisaari, finally provided a comprehensive framework for a way forward, providing supervised independence for Kosovo and strong protections for minorities, particularly Kosovan Serbs. No international consensus was reached and the Ahtisaari plan stalled in the UN Security Council.

The situation in Kosovo reached crisis proportions in 1998. After a series of attacks by ethnic Albanian guerillas against Serbian police and Yugoslav army troops, the Serbian government, under Milosevic, launched a violent and indiscriminately repressive crackdown. While NATO responded in March 1999 with a series of air strikes, Yugoslav forces commenced one of the last major human rights violations of the 20th century, killing, expelling, torturing, and raping Kosovo's ethnic Albanians in what has been termed a campaign of "ethnic cleansing." By the end of hostilities in June, the US State department estimated that about 10,000 ethnic Albanians were killed, and over 90%, or over 1.5 million individuals, were displaced. Countless others had been abused, tortured, and raped.

The record of international commitment in Kosovo, though certainly far from pristine, has been remarkable. Since 1999, the UN has maintained a military and civilian mission in the province, known as the United Nations Mission in Kosovo, or UNMIK. UNMIK is responsible of the provisional administration of Kosovo until further negotiations can ultimately determine the provinces status. The international community's efforts to ensure minority rights, though admirable, have not been entirely successful, as evidenced by ongoing attacks and riots against ethnic minorities.

Even with the declaration of independence, the international community will and should remain involved in Kosovo. NATO is committed, under the terms of the Ahtisaari plan, to sustaining a security presence in Kosovo, according to its mandate under U.N. Resolution 1244. Currently, NATO's Kosovo Force (KFOR) has about 15,000 troops in Kosovo. In addition, the European Union has agreed to lead an international civilian presence, to include a rule of law mission.

Mr. Chairman, regional tensions, particularly with Serbia, remain high. Serbian Prime Minister Vojislav Kostunica rejected the declaration of independence and called the new Kosovo "a false state." Serbia withdrew its ambassador from Washington following U.S. recognition of Kosovo, and the Serbian position is fully backed by Russia. Though rumors have suggested Serbian plans to take drastic steps such as cutting electricity supplies to Kosovo, no such steps have yet been taken.

The situation is further complicated by Serbian internal politics. Following Kosovo's declaration of independence, which caused serious shocks to the Serbian political system, Prime Minister Kostunica's governing coalition collapsed this past weekend. Serbians now face the likelihood that President Boris Tadic will dissolve the parliament in coming days, and they will go to the polls for the third time in two years, highlighting the political instability of the region.

Mr. Chairman, the approximately two million citizens of Kosovo have a recent legacy of violence, instability, and uncertainty. I thank you for bringing the important

issue of Kosovo and the situation in the Balkans, and I look forward to the testimony of our witness.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I yield back the balance of my time.

