CRISIS IN THE BALKANS

by Lt. Col. Robert L. Maginnis (USA Ret.)

NATO has responded to the tragedy in Kosovo and the suffering of Albanian Kosovars by mounting a massive U.S.-led air campaign against the Serbian military. FRC condemns the brutal regime of Yugoslav President Milosevic and supports humanitarian aid for the refugees. We believe the war can be ended without engaging in ground combat, however.

NATO should cease the bombing in exchange for a partitioned Kosovo that allows Serbia to keep its historic and cultural sites while affording safety and autonomy for the Kosovars. NATO members who did not participate in the bombings would provide troops to preserve the partition. A massive rebuilding effort, not unlike the Marshall Plan, will be required for divided Kosovo. Necessary resources should come from the European community.

The U.S. and NATO can certainly win a ground war in Kosovo if we are willing to pay the price in resources and American lives. The boundaries achieved, however, would be no more secure or supportive of American interests than if achieved through partitioning today.

The Serbs have been preparing for war, including massive underground complexes, for 50 years. Their troops are trained, equipped, and have a demonstrated reputation for fierceness. Difficult terrain and inclement weather that can limit vital close air support characterize the country.

Preparations for sustained ground operations would take months. NATO has no equipment pre-positioned in the Balkans. Ground forces require massive logistical support and the transportation infrastructure that remains is inadequate. A massive and expensive engineering effort to build roads, bridges, railroads, ports, airfields, and storage facilities will be required.

Neighboring countries are reluctant to be the launch pad for a ground assault. Macedonia and Greece have already said no and Hungary, which is a new NATO ally, may refuse for fear of drawing Russia into the fray.

There are also serious geopolitical implications. The Balkan crisis has energized Russia's ultra-nationalists and could lead to a new cold war. It has strengthened the position of potential authoritarian presidential candidate, General Alexander Lebed.

The Balkans will be an economic sinkhole for decades. Rebuilding the infrastructure devastated by the bombing will require diverting precious international aid from countries in Latin America, Africa, and Asia that are struggling toward democracy.

In a peculiar twist, NATO has allied itself with the Kosovar Liberation Army that has no democratic history, has close ties with Albanian Mafia and radical Islamic groups, and relies heavily on dealing in heroin and weapons for funds. The international community could unwittingly create a Balkan radical Islamic state not unlike the ruling Talibans in Afghanistan.

Acknowledgement: Helpful readers tell us that last month's reflections on motherhood are from the first chapter of Dale Hanson Bourke's book, *Everyday Miracles* (Word, 1989). Thanks, Dale, and thanks to our alert readers!

Kosovo signals a dramatic change in NATO's historic and chartered role as a "defensive alliance." The Balkan intervention sets a precedent for British Prime Minister Tony Blair's "new internationalism" and may be a model for the United Nations and/or NATO to use in imposing their will on other sovereign countries – Israel, for example?

The U.S. may appear a "paper tiger" to Chinese nationalists who are eyeing Taiwan. While America's military chiefs have pledged to be able to fight two regional wars simultaneously, the U.S. is struggling to sustain its military effort against a relatively passive Balkan foe. U.S. public opinion about the campaign is split. The Clinton administration has ordered the aircraft carrier U.S.S. Kitty Hawk from the sensitive Asian theater to the Persian Gulf, while ordering other carriers to join the Balkan war. The Balkan effort has already required the largest recall of reserve forces since the Gulf war.

NATO's interventionist policy may encourage proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and undermine nuclear disarmament. Russia has indefinitely postponed debate over a further nuclear disarmament. Rogue states like Iraq and North Korea will surely cite NATO's actions as reason to stock weapons of mass destruction. Other countries, fearing "new internationalism," may arm themselves as well.

We are morally obligated to help the Kosovar Albanians but there are 44 other civil wars around the world. We must not allow the Balkan war to stretch America's military resources so thin that our vital security interests are endangered elsewhere. WW

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Executive Vice President: Charles A. Donovan. Senior Editor: Karl Day. Assistant Editor: Laurel L. Cornell. Contributors: Megan A. Carroll; C. Porter Glass, Kevin E. Hoeft; Peter J. LaBarbera; Jan R. LaRue, Esq.; Lt. Col. Robert L. Maginnis (USA, Ret.); Jennifer A. Marshall; Stephanie M. Mollins; Robert G. Morrison; Janet Parshall; Robert E. Regier; Crystal M. Roberts; Anna M. Ryan; David M. Wagner, Esq.

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America's Legislative Puzzle

by Amy R. Myers

Whether encouraging women to work outside their homes; denying parents information on medical services performed on their children; or taxing marriage, death, and education savings, government policies can affect nearly every aspect of your life. Are you voicing your concerns to the people making these laws? Our Founding Fathers designed the process of making laws to be slow for fear of a large centralized and, perhaps, impetuous government. There are many steps in the process to create these laws – but that affords many opportunities for you to have an impact on them. The more you know, the more you may be able to do.

How a Bill Becomes A Law: Only a member of Congress (a representative or senator) can create a bill, the document written in legslative language and form. Even the president must ask a member of Congress to present a bill for him, such as the so-called "hate crimes" bill he recently announced. These bills are "introduced" and assigned to a "committee" that oversees that particular issue. Sometimes a bill must be sent to numerous committees because it addresses a variety of issues that different committees watch.

Committees Make Their Mark: Committees are where most of the real decisions are made. Each side of Congress (House and Senate) has numerous committees with "subcommittees" to focus on issues more closely. As an example, let's look at a bill that worked its way through the process – the *Partial-Birth Abortion Ban Act.* Rep. Canady (R-Fla.) introduced this bill in the House and it was sent first to the Judiciary Committee (currently 37 members), then to its Constitution subcommittee (13 members). This committee, and the entire Judiciary Committee, studied the bill and proposed changes or "amendments" to it. Proposed amendments must garner a majority vote in the committee in order to change a bill.

Calling All Members of the House and Senate: Once the bill is passed out of committee, a majority of the entire House must approve or "pass" the measure. Members of the House may also propose and adopt changes to the bill before its passage. The Senate completes a similar process and it often makes different changes to the same bill. If the House and Senate pass different versions of the bill, the two chambers send members to a "conference committee" where the differences are worked out. It is this process that sometimes results in a bill quite unlike that passed by either body initially. The final product is a "conference report." The Constitution requires that the House and Senate pass the identical bill before it can be sent to the president for his signature or veto.

Presidential Action: If the president approves and signs a bill, it becomes law. A presidential veto, however, sends the bill back to Congress where members of Congress can either accept the veto – let it die – or they can attempt to reject, or "override," the veto. An override requires a two-thirds majority vote in both Houses and is usually difficult to achieve.

A Bill's Demise: President Clinton vetoed the PBA bill in the 104th Congress. Although the House overrode the veto, the Senate did not. The result in the 105th Congress was the same but the Senate vote came closer to the necessary two-thirds requirement.

The Process, FRC, and You: The legislative process is very detailed and highly complex. As we have seen with the PBA ban, rules and regulations cannot be changed quickly. Still, with perseverance, we are making progress. In time, the hearts and minds of members of Congress change, and then the laws. It is the efforts and involvement of all of us that makes this progress possible.

At FRC, we track hundreds of legislative details on a daily basis. We sift through the thousands of ideas, bills, and amendments introduced each Congress looking for items that affect family, faith, and freedom and for any "poison pills" that may be hidden therein. Our policy analysts work with members of Congress to develop policies that promote and support traditional families, individual responsibility, and religious liberty. Our government relations team organizes and participates in coalitions of pro-family members and pro-family advocates at the national, state, and local levels to support family-friendly legislation. Our media relations team works around the clock with members of the media to highlight and bring public attention to these initiatives.

In an upcoming issue of *Washington Watch*, we will address ways in which you can voice your values, so Congress will value your voice. If you would like more information on the legislative process and ways you can become involved, please call 1-800-225-4008 to order FRC's "Guide to Government" (BL017). WW

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