

PREPARED STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE
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SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
TO THE
SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
HEARING ON
OPERATION ALLIED FORCE

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Mr. Chairman. I welcome the opportunity to be here with General Shelton to discuss with you the ongoing NATO military campaign in Kosovo, and the situation in Kosovo generally.

We, with our NATO allies, are now in the fourth week of Operation Allied Force. We have a long road ahead, but no one should doubt NATO's capability and determination—or our unity. Our purposes are clear—and they have broad international support. Milosevic must withdraw his military, paramilitary and police forces from Kosovo. He must also allow all refugees to return, with full access for humanitarian assistance and with the deployment of a NATO-led international security force. And the people of Kosovo must be given the democratic self-government which they have too long been denied.

Clearly, Milosevic will try to divide NATO. But we will not be divided. Our allies are getting stronger in their determination as the operations continue. Every NATO country is contributing to the effort, in a military or humanitarian capacity. We will stand our ground. And we will be patient. NATO operations will continue until our terms are met. We will intensify our air operation, and we will provide our commanders the tools they need.

Operation Allied Force. Our military objective is to degrade and damage the military and security structure that President Milosevic has used to depopulate and destroy the Albanian majority in Kosovo.

NATO forces are making significant military progress. We've gained tactical maneuverability over a tough air defense system, even in the face of difficult weather and terrain. This allows us to fly where we want and when we want with acceptable risk 24 hours a day. We are systematically choking off the Yugoslav army and security forces in Kosovo by cutting their supply lines. We have already eliminated 100% of his refining capability and 50% of his ammunition production. As we isolate and weaken the Serb forces in Kosovo, we are launching aggressive attacks against troops on the ground by hitting

staging areas, headquarters, and forces in the field. These attacks will accelerate as we continue to subdue Serb defenses and deploy additional aircraft, including the Apache helicopters which are being deployed to Albania. We will continue to attack Milosevic's command, control and communications and other elements of the infrastructure that supports his machinery of repression.

NATO's campaign is showing results. We're seeing decreasing military mobility and eroding morale. There are two important signs of sinking morale in the reports of desertions from combat units in Kosovo and a growing effort by young Yugoslavs to evade the reserve call-ups.

U.S. Contribution to Operation Allied Force. The United States currently has well over 400 planes assigned to air operations over Yugoslavia, part of an allied force of well over 600 planes. In terms of attack sorties, we have flown about 60%, our allies 40% -- and approximately the same proportion applies to overall missions, such as support, reconnaissance and tankers.

Intensified Air Campaign and Enhanced Air Package. We and our allies are unanimous that we should intensify the air campaign against Milosevic. Such intensification is part of our planned, sustained, phased air campaign. We have advised the allies from the beginning that, once we start, we have to see the campaign through to its successful conclusion. They have agreed. And they, and we, have planned for a tough, hard campaign.

As part of this effort, last weekend I approved an enhanced air package requested by General Clark. This includes a total of 82 airplanes: 24 additional F-16CJ fighters, which are armed with HARM missiles and used for the suppression of enemy air defenses; four additional A-10 close air support aircraft, which can also be used in an observer role as OA-10s, helping to scout out targets on the ground; six additional EA-6B Prowlers which will also be used in the suppression of enemy air defenses, along with the 24 F-16CJs; 39 KC-135 tankers; and two KC-10 tankers. In addition, there will be seven C-130 transport aircraft in the package.

The addition of these aircraft will allow us to do two things: expand the number of strikes over any 24-hour period; and give us more deep strike capacity as necessary. This will allow us to increase the intensity of the air campaign over Kosovo and Yugoslavia.

As you know, General Clark has more recently requested a substantial number of additional U.S. planes, and this request is being reviewed now. Without going into detail, the planes fall into three categories: ground attack, air suppression, and tankers. The request, if approved, would allow for tradeoffs

between various types of planes, and the Joint Staff is considering the appropriate ways to fulfill it. We hope to have a decision on this soon.

Apaches. On April 3, President Clinton approved the deployment of two battalions of Apache attack helicopters to Albania to help support the air operations of Operation Allied Force. These helicopters are to be accompanied by Multiple Launch Rocket System artillery; a support unit; a robust force protection element, including Bradley fighting vehicles; military police; a signal unit, and other elements such as military intelligence, aviation maintenance, and other required support. There will be some other support helicopters, such as Black Hawks and Chinooks. The deployment of the Apaches, which has already begun, will take approximately 10 days – not because of moving the Apaches themselves, which could be self-deployed in about two days, but because moving the supporting force requires numerous C-17 loads into an already overtaxed and quite limited airport in Tirana, Albania.

Providing the Apaches was done at the request of General Clark, who wanted a wider variety of weapons to attack tanks, artillery and APCs on the ground in Kosovo. It is very much in line with our stated objective of degrading and diminishing the Yugoslav ability to attack Kosovar Albanians.

Ground forces. Let me address the issue of ground forces. We believe, based on the advice of our military commanders and the reports of our intelligence, that the air campaign is being increasingly effective, and will produce the success that we desire. That campaign will continue, with more missions, more sorties, more aircraft -- and more targets and more effect. There is no intention to use ground troops in a hostile or non-permissive environment. Nor is there any consensus in the alliance, or among the American public and their representatives in Congress, to do so. And, most important, there has been no recommendation by the NATO military commanders to change our current approach.

NATO has examined the possibility of ground operations from the very beginning of the crisis. There has, of course, been detailed planning for a NATO-led peace implementation force, operating in a permissive environment. In addition, NATO considered an option to enter Kosovo to maintain a cease-fire without a comprehensive peace agreement between Belgrade and the Kosovar authorities.

Last year, the NATO military authorities made an assessment for various options for use of ground troops in a nonpermissive or hostile environment. The options included an operation to enter the FRY with force against full-scale resistance by Belgrade and conduct offensive operations throughout the FRY, as well as an operation using ground forces against military resistance, but with the

objective limited to defeat of the FRY forces in Kosovo itself. These assessments included estimates of the scale of forces that would be required. Without going into details, suffice it to say that any such operation would, while militarily feasible, involve very substantial forces, and carry considerable risks.

These assessments could be quickly updated and developed into full-scale operational plans should the need arise. As General Shelton and I have said, should General Clark and the Chairman of the Military Committee make a recommendation that the earlier assessments be updated -- that is, should they advise that the point has been reached where further planning for possible use of ground troops is necessary -- we will take that request under advisement, aware that the planning could be done within a short period of time.

Atrocities. True to form, Belgrade is taking every opportunity to make a bad situation worse. We are deeply concerned that hundreds of thousands of people are at risk within Kosovo. It appears that Belgrade is deliberately depriving them of food and shelter. We are receiving many, many credible reports of atrocities. NATO this weekend released images of what appear to be mass gravesites in Kosovo. We should not be surprised if more graves are found.

Belgrade has been warned. Those found responsible for war crimes and crimes against humanity will be held accountable. Our nations are providing information to the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia. And the Tribunal will follow the evidence however far or high it leads.

Milosevic has not achieved his primary goal of eliminating the Kosovar Liberation Army. Although it is weakened, the KLA continues to fight and its ranks are increasing.

As NATO air power meets our military goals, NATO is also responding to the humanitarian crisis. The Department of Defense is now providing and transporting more than 1 million rations and thousands of tents, sleeping bags and other supplies for the refugees in Albania and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. We are also providing troops from our Marine elements in the region to help respond to the refugee crisis. Meanwhile, our allies are also providing relief supplies and in fact are responsible for the vast majority of the shelter, medical supplies, and food relief sustaining the latest victims of Milosevic's brutality.

Congressional Engagement. Finally, as I said earlier this week, Congressional debate is healthy and it's helpful. This hearing is one part of our intensive, continuing dialogue with Congress. I was grateful that a number of members of Congress traveled with me during this past week to visit our troops in Aviano and Ramstein, in Germany, and to also consult with our allies at SHAPE headquarters and in Brussels. We've seen a strong and growing

consensus in Congress and in the country for the campaign that we have under way.

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NATO is engaged in a serious military effort in Kosovo. It will not be quick, easy, or neat. We have to be prepared for the possibility of casualties among NATO forces. But we cannot falter, and we will not fail. Our engagement in Operation Allied Force is justified by US interests – strategic, political and humanitarian. We intend to see it through.

Thank you very much.

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