

THE FOLLY OF COMMITTING GROUND TROOPS TO KOSOVO

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. GILLMOR). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. TANCREDO) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. TANCREDO. Mr. Speaker, as we approach the decision to send ground troops into the war in Kosovo, it is important for us to look at the historical events surrounding that particular area and to then look at the request that is being made, that will probably be made for this Congress to approve in some fashion or other, a request from the administration to commit American troops to this folly.

During the break, I was given an article that I found quite sobering, from an individual in my district. The title of the article is "Serbia: The lesson of Army Group E." It came off of the net, World Net Daily, Friday, March 26. The author, a gentleman by the name of Joel A. Ruth. And I quote from this article because I think it needs to be widely read and widely heard, again, as we approach this potential decision to send American troops in. It says:

Before we engage the Serbs in a limited war over Kosovo, it would be wise to review the experiences of the 22 German divisions that were committed to stamping out Serb resistance between 1941 and 1945. While the Germans also had the help of 200,000 Croatian, Slovenian and Bosnian Moslem volunteer auxiliaries, they still could not do the job, and with a combined army of over 700,000 men willing to commit atrocities that the United States and her allies would never contemplate in this, quote, civilized day and age.

In the end, and without direct Allied help, the Serbs succeeded, through extreme human sacrifice and one of the bloodiest partisan wars ever fought in history, in recapturing over half their country by the time the war had ended on all the other fronts.

Army Group E surrendered to the Serbs and was subsequently force-marched the length and width of Serbia without food until every German soldier had dropped dead by the wayside.

The fate of the Croatian Slovenians and Moslems who had helped the Germans was mass murder; all prisoners were taken, shot and clubbed or tortured to death and dumped in mass graves. Over one half million soldiers and their families were thus exterminated by the Serbs, over 1 million murdered if one counts the victims of the German Army Group E.

After the war the Serbs under Marshal Tito were determined that no outside aggressor would ever enjoy an advantage in occupying any part of Serbia ever again. Therefore, for the next 40 years, a massive system of underground defenses were constructed deep under the mountains, atomic bomb-proof and capable of maintaining a million-man army underground for several years while guerilla warfare would rage against any future aggressors. These underground facilities contain massive quantities of munitions, field hospitals, food stocks, fuel and consist of thousands of miles of tunnels which can enable a guerilla force to strike and vanish to safety during bombing and artillery strikes.

Believe me, if the Germans who utilized the most brutal tactics could not subdue the Serbs in 5 years when they did not possess

such a defensive infrastructure, how much harder is it going to be now that they have spent 50 years in preparing for the next invaders?

The article goes on to claim that any attempt on the part of NATO and this administration to participate in any such venture would be just as full of folly and certainly would be just as bloody. And the idea that we can bomb Milosevic into submission is, of course, if you are taking this at face value, if the information supplied in this particular article is correct, then that theory, that strategy, is idiotic.

For if there is such a system of caverns and caves within Serbia where a million men could be housed and probably are being housed even at the present time, then how can we possibly expect to really cripple him through any amount of bombing that we can possibly do? It will, of course, take armed forces on the ground, and it will, of course, turn into the same sort of bloody situation that preceded us there some 50 years ago.

So I ask my colleagues once again to reconsider, when we are asked to commit American forces to this area, that we consider the lessons of history as it is so often difficult for us to understand. But it is important for us to realize that history does repeat itself, that this is a bad place for us to be with no particular reason for us to be there.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Washington (Mr. METCALF) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. METCALF addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

SCHOOL MODERNIZATION INITIATIVE—KEY COMPONENT OF 1999 DEMOCRATIC EDUCATION AGENDA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 1999, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. ROYBAL-ALLARD) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Ms. ROYBAL-ALLARD. Mr. Speaker, one of the priorities of the Clinton administration and congressional Democrats is improving education. Democrats recognize that the future of this country depends upon ensuring that all American children receive a high quality education that prepares them for the jobs of the 21st century. Democrats believe that every public school must be a place where facilities are up to date and in good repair, where classrooms are not overcrowded, where the environment is safe and drug-free, where students have adequate textbooks and computers, and where teachers are well-qualified. This is why Democrats are once again promoting an aggressive, comprehensive agenda to strengthen and improve our Nation's public schools.

This evening, I would like to highlight a key component of the 1999 Democratic education agenda, the school modernization initiative. This initiative will help address the tragic conditions of overcrowded and crumbling American schools. Sadly, Mr. Speaker, thousands of our public school children are trying to learn in schools that are overcrowded and in desperate need of repair. This problem is exacerbated by the fact that our country has the highest number of students in our history and enrollment will continue to grow at a considerable rate for at least the next decade. In order to keep pace with this growth, the Department of Education has estimated that we need to build 6,000 new schools over the next 10 years just to maintain current class size. This crisis is compounded by the fact that in addition to our overcrowded schools, many of our existing schools are in desperate need of repair. According to a 1998 report by the American Society of Civil Engineers, American schools are in worse shape than any other part of our Nation's infrastructure, including our roads, our bridges and our mass transit. Moreover, in 1995, the nonpartisan General Accounting Office, in an in-depth study on the condition of the Nation's public elementary and secondary schools, found that 60 percent of our schools in all regions of the countries are in desperate need of repair. Thirty-eight percent of our urban schools, 30 percent of our rural schools and 29 percent of suburban schools have at least one building in need of a new roof, a new plumbing system, a new floor or a new electrical system. In addition, 58 percent of our Nation's schools face serious environmental problems, such as ventilation, heating, air conditioning and lighting problems, along with environmental hazards such as asbestos, lead in the water and lead-based paint and Radon.

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These conditions are dangerous and unacceptable. Leaky roofs, buildings in despair and overcrowded classrooms are not merely annoyances or inconveniences. They are barriers to learning.

This is substantiated by study after study that has produced strong evidence of the link between academic achievement and the condition of our schools. Students who attend class in clean, safe buildings not only do better academically, they also receive a far more positive message about their self worth than students who must attend run-down and overcrowded schools.

That is why President Clinton and the Democrats in Congress have a responsible and realistic blueprint for improving our schools. In order to help States and localities address this critical issue, the President has again included his school modernization initiative in his budget proposal for this year. Democrats in the House and Senate support this much needed proposal