

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

August 31, 1998

Dear Bob:

Thank you for your letter about the deteriorating situation in Kosovo. I fully agree that our efforts to facilitate a political resolution to the conflict must ultimately be backed by credible military force.

As you know, it has taken persistent U.S. leadership to focus the international community on the conflict in Kosovo and the dangers it holds for regional stability. The nations of the Contact Group, led by the United States, demanded that Belgrade cease repression and withdraw security forces, permit effective international monitoring, facilitate international assistance to and return of those displaced by the fighting and make rapid progress in talks with Kosovar Albanians.

At our insistence, sanctions were applied to Belgrade -- such as a freeze of overseas assets, a ban on new investments and suspension of Yugoslav Air landing rights. These measures are having a substantial impact on the FRY economy but will not in themselves be decisive. I believe NATO must be prepared to act to prevent a broader regional conflict or a humanitarian disaster. I also believe that the clearer NATO's resolve, the greater the prospects for productive negotiations.

At U.S. initiative, NATO launched and then accelerated contingency planning for various force options. However, we must not only have in place a full range of concrete and effective plans, but must demonstrate the Alliance's will to implement them, if necessary.

To be very frank, the key obstacle to this is the desire of some Allies for a United Nations mandate. Some fear the precedent it might set for NATO to act on its own authority. For others, it is a matter of practical parliamentary politics. In any case, Milosevic must understand that force is a real possibility. I have spoken with Tony Blair, Helmut Kohl and Jacques Chirac, and

I think we are making progress. I assure you, I will not be satisfied until we are in a position to act, and can use that prospect against Milosevic in a serious fashion.

Again, thank you for writing. I am grateful to know that I have your support.

Sincerely,

Bill Clinton

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