

# Verbatim Special: The Balkan War

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"We need a Europe that is safe, secure, free, united, a good partner with us for trading. ... That's what this Kosovo thing is all about."—**President Clinton, speech to American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees, March 23.**

"What if someone had listened to Winston Churchill and stood up to Adolf Hitler earlier? How many people's lives might have been saved?"—**Clinton, AFSCME speech, March 23.**

"We're coming close to starting World War III."—**Sen. Ted Stevens, floor statement, March 23.**

"We have plans for a swift and severe air campaign. This will be painful for the Serbs. We hope that, relatively quickly, ... the Serbs will realize that they have made a mistake."—**Pentagon spokesman Kenneth Bacon, briefing, March 23.**

"North Atlantic Treaty Organization forces have initiated military action against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. ... The military objective of our action is to deter further action against the Kosovars and to diminish the ability of the Yugoslav army to continue those attacks, if necessary."—**Secretary of Defense William S. Cohen, DoD briefing, March 24.**

"I don't see this as a long-term operation. I think that this is something ... that is achievable within a relatively short period of time."—**Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, PBS "Newshour," March 24.**

"If NATO's invited to [send a peace-keeping force], our troops should take part, ... but I do not intend to put our troops in Kosovo to fight a war."—**Clinton, address to nation, March 24.**

"This is in fact NATO's attempt to enter the 21st century as global policeman. Russia will never agree to it."—**Russian President Boris Yeltsin, Kremlin statement, March 24.**

"We're going to systematically and

progressively attack, disrupt, degrade, devastate, and, ultimately—unless President Milosevic complies with the demands of the international community—we're going to destroy these forces and their facilities and support."—**Supreme Allied Commander Europe Gen. Wesley Clark, NATO briefing, March 25.**

"These bombs are not going to do the job. It's almost pathetic. You're just going to solidify the determination of the Serbs to resist a peace agreement. You'd have to drop the bridges and turn off the lights in Belgrade to have even a remote chance of changing Milosevic's mind. What you'll get is all the old Vietnam stuff—bombing pauses, escalation, negotiations, trouble."—**Sen. John McCain, New York Times (NYT), March 25.**

"It was always understood from the outset that there was no way we were going to stop these paramilitary forces who were going in there and murdering civilians in these villages."—**Clark, CNN interview, March 26.**

"We are on the brink of a major humanitarian disaster in Kosovo, the likes of which have not been seen in Europe since the closing stages of World War II."—**Allied spokesman Jamie Shea, NATO briefing, March 28.**

"We're in it, and we have to win it, and we have to do whatever is necessary in order to ensure that this is not a failure. ... That means that we have to exercise every option. ... We must win this conflict with whatever it takes."—**McCain, ABC's "This Week," March 28.**

"I don't know if we can do it without ground troops."—**Gen. Michael Ryan, USAF Chief of Staff, NYT, March 28.**

"We never thought we could stop this. You can't conduct police actions from the air in any country."—**Clark, press interview, March 29.**

"We miscalculated. We thought when

the bombing started Milosevic would play the victim, not turn into Adolf Hitler Jr."—**Unnamed US official, NYT, March 30.**

"I think right now it is difficult to say that we have prevented one act of brutality at this stage."—**Bacon, DoD briefing, March 30.**

"That [possibly running out of certain munitions] is something that we do worry about. We have a supply now, but it won't last forever."—**Bacon, DoD briefing, March 30.**

"He's hurting. We know that he is running short of fuel. We're now starting to hit him very hard on the ground. ... You will start to see the resolve starting to crack very quickly."—**Air Commodore David Wilby, NATO briefing, March 31.**

"The thing that bothers me about introducing ground troops into a hostile situation, into Kosovo and into the Balkans, is the prospect of never being able to get them out."—**Clinton, CBS "60 Minutes II," March 31.**

"We may not have the means to stop it, but we have shown we have the will to try."—**NATO Secretary General Javier Solana, NYT, March 31.**

"We clearly intend to loosen his grip on power and break his will to continue and, as weather permits, to chip off his assets in Kosovo. If we start to chip away at the institutions that keep him in power, he may think it over."—**Gen. Klaus Naumann, then chairman of NATO Military Committee, NYT, April 1.**

"[In a 1998 NATO study of troops needed for a ground invasion], the numbers came in high. No one said yes, no one said no; it was taken off the table. ... It was a complete eye-roller."—**Senior Administration official, Washington Post (WP), April 1.**

"When you fly less than 50 bombing sorties per day for seven days, you're not serious about what you're doing.

At best, it's sporadic bombing."—**Retired USAF Gen. Buster Glosson, key figure in Gulf War air campaign, Associated Press, April 1.**

"The ring is closing around the Yugoslav armed forces."—**Solana, NATO briefing, April 1.**

"I'm surprised we didn't bomb it [the downed F-117 fighter], because the standing procedure has always been that, when you lose something of real or perceived value—in this case, real technology, stealth—you destroy it. ... Once you get the pilot out of there, you blow the thing to smithereens."—**Retired USAF Gen. John Michael Loh, former head of Air Combat Command, Defense Daily, April 2.**

"We are prepared to sustain this effort for the long haul. Our plan is to persist until we prevail. ... Let me be clear. The ethnic cleansing of Kosovo cannot stand as a permanent event."—**Clinton, remarks to press, April 5.**

"I think we wish we had a larger inventory of certain types of weapons. There has been significant utilization of some of our more advanced cruise missile systems."—**Deputy Secretary of Defense John Hamre, speech in Philadelphia, April 6.**

"So far, we haven't heard complaints from the CINCs, that I know of, that they can't do the mission. ... So as we speak today, the readiness of the US military has not been really affected by this. We have the capability to cover all the regions as we speak today. The number of US aircraft in theater is nothing near the total aircraft or military capability we have today in the US military. Even though it is a fairly sophisticated, a fairly large commitment, we still have a significant amount of forces [in] reserve that can handle the two MRCs."—**USAF Maj. Gen. Charles Wald, DoD briefing, April 6.**

"This is no time to pause. ... We will reject any settlement that freezes the result of Milosevic's genocide and rewards him for his brutality."—**Cohen, April 7.**

"This is war as waged by humanitarians, idealists, and the flotsam of the counterculture. This NATO war machine is being directed by whom? By a German foreign minister from the pacifist Green Party. By the head of NATO, Javier Solana, who vigorously opposed his nation's entry into NATO

lest Spain develop close military ties to the United States. By an American secretary of state who supported the nuclear freeze and opposed the Gulf War. And by an American President who—well, forget his military history."—**Columnist Charles Krauthammer, WP, April 8.**

"We've been officially reassured at a high level that Russia will not be drawn into the conflict in the Balkans."—**White House spokesman Joe Lockhart, Reuters, April 9.**

"They want to bring in ground troops. They are preparing for that. They want simply to seize Yugoslavia to make it their protectorate. We cannot let that happen to Yugoslavia. ... I told NATO, the Americans, the Germans: Don't push us toward military action. Otherwise, there will be a European war for sure and possibly world war." —**Yeltsin, televised statement, April 9.**

"NATO early on made an assessment ... as to what [number of ground troops] it would actually take to do the job, and those numbers varied from lows down in the twenties—20,000 or so—up to a couple of hundred thousand."—**Gen. Hugh Shelton, JCS Chairman, ABC's "This Week," April 11.**

"Russia is an absolutely essential player in the search for peace with Belgrade. We must respect its desire to play a constructive role in the security and stability of our continent."—**French Foreign Minister Hubert Vedrine, WP, April 13.**

"This campaign has the highest proportion of precision weaponry that's ever been used in any air operation anywhere. ... [NATO is] using almost all precision strike weapons when the targets are point targets, and in some cases we're actually attacking individual tanks on the ground with laser-guided weaponry. The reason for this is it's a very efficient means of attack, it reduces collateral damage, and it reduces the continuing exposure of aircraft going after the same target."—**Clark, NATO briefing, April 13.**

"We can't have troops passing out blankets one day and then tell those same forces to conduct combat operations the next. You've got to train the force. You've got to prepare them."—**Retired Army Gen. George Joulwan, former SACEUR, WP, April 14.**

"I would characterize the [rules of engagement] as as strict as I've seen in my 27 years [in the] military. ... The rules have been, and are, that, unless you're 100 percent sure in your mind what you're hitting ... you won't drop."—**Wald, DoD briefing, April 14.**

"All the suggestions—'Did you consider this? Did you consider that?' We did."—**Albright, statement to a House committee, April 15.**

"The military mission ... is to reduce, diminish, degrade the military capability that Milosevic's forces have to conduct their campaign of brutal repression."—**Cohen, Senate Armed Services Committee (SASC), April 15.**

"We could sit on the sidelines. We could fold our arms and say, 'It's not our problem.' But I think that that would have been a real challenge to our own humanity."—**Cohen, SASC, April 15.**

"We're certainly engaged in hostilities. We're engaged in combat. Whether that measures up to, quote, a classic definition of war, I'm not qualified to say."—**Cohen, SASC, April 15.**

"Limited actions beget limited results."—**McCain, SASC, April 15.**

"If the public knew our state of readiness, or our lack of readiness, there would be an outrage out there. The fact that we are roughly at one-half the force strength that we were in 1991—How many people know that?"—**Sen. James Inhofe, SASC, April 15.**

"I'd say Milosevic has lost. He's losing his military infrastructure and his ability to sustain his forces. He's losing his air defense system slowly but surely. We see signs of lower morale, evidence of desertions, leadership gaps, command-and-control problems. It's not over. ... We're in the first 25 minutes of a two-hour movie. You can't predict how it's going to end."—**Bacon, WP, April 18.**

"We won't serve as a postman. We won't deliver NATO's ultimatums to Belgrade. That is not our mission."—**Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov, statement, April 26.**

"Of course, [we] may have one flaw in our thinking. ... Our flaw may be that we think [Milosevic] may have at least a little bit of responsibility for his country and may act accordingly, because otherwise he may end up

being the ruler of the rubble.”—**Nau-  
mann, statement to Defense Writers  
Group (DWG), April 26.**

“We are winning. Milosevic is losing, and he knows it. He should face up to this, and he should face up to it now.”—**Clark, NATO briefing, April 27.**

“Step by step, bit by bit, we are cutting off his ability to reinforce or to sustain his forces easily down in Kosovo. Of course he can still walk them in through the gullies and the rivers and so forth, and it is never going to be complete, but it is certainly complicating their life down there.”—**Clark, NATO briefing, April 27.**

“He’s bringing reinforcements in continually. If you actually added up what’s there on any given day, you might actually find out that he’s strengthened his forces in there.”—**Clark, NATO briefing, April 27.**

“We have never said that we can fight two wars simultaneously. What we have said is that we would want to structure our resources in a manner so that we can unequivocally fight one major regional contingency—a war—and to be able to have enough resources to deter our opponent from accomplishing [its] objectives in a second theater until we can clean up the operation in the first and move resources to take care of the second. ... And I think we do have the resources for it. But right now, we’re committing the equivalent of the MRC worth of air assets for this operation.”—**Hamre, to Senate appropriations committee, April 27.**

“What good has been accomplished so far? Absolutely nothing. What long-term goal will be accomplished by having our troops there? None, unless you’re willing to occupy all of Yugoslavia.”—**Rep. Tom DeLay, House Majority Whip, floor statement, April 28.**

“There are deep reservations in the Congress about the prosecution of this war. It’s been screwed up from the first day.”—**Rep. Heather A. Wilson, floor statement, April 28.**

“The Secretary of State, the Secretary of Defense, and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff told us that this was no big deal, that we were going to bomb for a couple of days, 48 hours, and then stop bombing, and Milosevic would come to the table. When asked the question, ‘What if he does not come to the table?’ they said, ‘Well, we will go to Phase II, and Phase II is that we will bomb for a few more days. Then he will be going to the table, by crackie.’ And

then we asked, ‘Then what?’ Then they said, ‘Well, we will bomb for another week and that will force him to come to the table and this will be all over with.’ And then we asked, ‘Then what?’ There was silence.”—**DeLay, floor statement, April 28.**

“I say to my colleagues, we have a war in Yugoslavia. We can call it whatever we want, but it is a euphemism unless we recognize it is a war. It is an unmitigated disaster. Our and NATO’s involvement in this war is an unmitigated disaster. That is the ugly truth, and everybody knows it. They certainly know and talk about it in the Pentagon.”—**Rep. Doug Bereuter, floor statement, April 28.**

“Clinton is a better communicator than anyone else. Once Clinton decides that’s what he’s going to do [to negotiate an end to war with Milosevic], he’ll sell it. If Nixon could sell the fall of Saigon as peace with honor, Clinton can sell this.”—**“Senior Administration official,” NYT, April 29.**

“Airpower works best when it is used decisively. Shock, mass are the way to achieve early results. Clearly because of the constraints in this operation, we have not been able to, haven’t seen that at this point.”—**Gen. Richard Hawley, ACC commander, statement to DWG, April 29.**

“We are going to be in desperate need, in my command, for a significant retrenchment in commitments for a significant period of time. ... I think we have a real problem facing us three, four, five months down the road in the readiness of the stateside units.”—**Hawley, DWG, April 29.**

“We have no interest in destroying more targets in Serbia than is absolutely necessary. We dislike using power, really.”—**Gen. Christian Hvidt, Danish chief of defense, NYT, May 2.**

“We clearly can do two major theater wars. Now, if you had something happen in the Gulf, and if you had something happen in Korea, then we would have to make a decision.”—**Gen. Joseph Ralston, vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, NBC’s “Meet the Press,” May 2.**

“The fact that the lights went out across 70 percent of the country, I think, shows that NATO has its finger on the light switch in Yugoslavia now, and we can turn the power off whenever we need to and whenever we want to.”—**Shea, NATO briefing, May 3.**

“We can have a bombing pause if it’s clear that it will be in aid of [a] larger purpose.”—**Clinton, news conference, May 3.**

“I don’t think you can characterize [the Administration goal] as ‘total victory.’ That’s not what I’m asking for.”—**Clinton, news conference, May 3.**

“The President of the United States is prepared to lose a war rather than do the hard work, the politically risky work, of fighting it as the leader of the greatest nation on Earth should fight when our interests and values are imperiled. ... Shame on the President if he persists in abdicating his responsibilities, but shame on us if we let him.”—**McCain, floor statement, May 4.**

“We need to find a way to reconcile the conditions of a coalition war with the principle of military operations such as surprise and overwhelming force. We did not apply either in Operation Allied Force, and this cost time, effort, and potentially additional casualties.”—**Nauermann, NATO briefing, May 4.**

“The mission is to pin them down, cut them off, take them out. ... We have pinned them down, we have pretty much largely cut them off, and are about to begin to take them out.”—**NATO spokesman Maj. Gen. Walter Jertz, NATO briefing, May 6.**

“Let there be no doubt: This war must be won. ... The overriding justification for military action is quite simply the nature of the enemy we face. We are not dealing with some minor thug whose local brutalities may offend our sensibilities from time to time. Milosevic’s regime and the genocidal ideology that sustains it represent something altogether different—a truly monstrous evil, one that cannot be merely checked or contained, one that must be totally defeated. ... There are, in the end, no humanitarian wars. War is serious and it is deadly. Casualties, including civilian casualties, are to be expected. Trying to fight a war with one hand tied behind your back is the way to lose it. We always regret the loss of lives, but we should have no doubt that it is the men of evil, not our troops or pilots, who bear the guilt.”—**Margaret Thatcher, Wall Street Journal op-ed article, May 6.**

“It’s not a conventional thing, where one side’s going to win and one side’s going to lose.”—**Clinton, remarks to press, in Germany, May 6.** ■