

# 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 Ko-  
sovo. 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 com-  
plicating their life down there.”—**Clark,  
NATO briefing, April 27.**

“He’s bringing reinforcements in con-  
tinually. If you actually added up what’s  
there on any given day, you might actu-  
ally find out that he’s strengthened his  
forces in there.”—**Clark, NATO brief-  
ing, 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 accomplish-  
ing [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 Yugosla-  
via.”—**Rep. Tom DeLay, House Major-  
ity 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 Secre-  
tary 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 euphem-  
ism 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 communica-  
tor than anyone else. Once Clinton  
decides that’s what he’s going to do  
[to negotiate an end to war with Milo-  
sevic], he’ll sell it. If Nixon could sell  
the fall of Saigon as peace with honor,  
Clinton can sell this.”—**“Senior Ad-  
ministration 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 destroy-  
ing more targets in Serbia than is  
absolutely necessary. We dislike  
using power, really.”—**Gen. Chris-  
tian Hvidt, Danish chief of defense,  
NYT, May 2.**

“We clearly can do two major the-  
ater 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 confer-  
ence, 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 Presi-  
dent if he persists in abdicating his  
responsibilities, but shame on us if  
we let him.”—**McCain, floor state-  
ment, 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 overwhelm-  
ing force. We did not apply either in  
Operation Allied Force, and this cost  
time, effort, and potentially additional  
casualties.”—**Naumann, NATO brief-  
ing, 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 na-  
ture of the enemy we face. We are not  
dealing with some minor thug whose  
local brutalities may offend our sensi-  
bilities 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.** ■