

REPUBLICANS CRITICIZED CLINTON DURING KOSOVO CONFLICT

From March 24, 1999 to June 10, 1999, the United States and NATO engaged in a military campaign to protect ethnic Albanians in Kosovo from Serbian aggression. While American troops engaged in battle, Republican presidential candidates and leaders in the House and Senate criticized the Clinton administration and the war in Kosovo, including the proposed supplemental funding for the conflict.

REPUBLICAN PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES:

Then-GOP Presidential candidate Governor George W. Bush: According to the Houston Chronicle: “Bush, in Austin, criticized President Clinton’s administration for not doing enough to enunciate a goal for the Kosovo military action and indicated the bombing campaign might not be a tough enough response. ‘Victory means exit strategy, and it’s important for the president to explain to us what the exit strategy is,’ Bush said.” [Houston Chronicle, 4/9/99]

Then-GOP Presidential candidate Dan Quayle: “What has happened is we have taken a political crisis and a humanitarian crisis and escalated it into a full military crisis. The handling of the situation in the Balkans reflects the inattention of the Clinton Administration to foreign policy. ... You have the same situation [as Vietnam]. Ambiguity, no stated, clear cut mission and then you are going to have to be there quite some time.” [Omaha World Herald, 3/28/99]

Then-GOP Presidential candidate Lamar Alexander: “Once we’ve started bombing we should bomb aggressively and consistently and for a long time to try and bring Milosevic to the table. But the president needs to tell us the rest of the story. Which is that if we put peace-keeping American forces in Kosovo they are going to be there for a long time, maybe as long as they have been in Korea, 25 to 50 years; and if they are harmed as they were in Somalia, then we are going to put other forces in there to make sure that they are safe.” [Fox News, “Hannity & Colmes,” 3/26/99]

Then-GOP Presidential candidate Pat Buchanan: “And what are we doing bombing and attacking this tiny country that has never attacked the United States to rip away from them a province that does not belong to us? I believe it is an unjust war. I think we have failed in our strategic objectives, and it is now becoming basically no longer a war for Kosovo but a war to save NATO’s credibility and NATO’s face. And that does not justify sending in an army of 100,000 American ground troops into the Balkans.” [NBC, “Meet the Press,” 4/25/99]

Then-GOP Presidential candidate Gary Bauer: “The President has not demonstrated he’s got a way to solve a crisis or conflict that literally has been raging since 1350. ... They treated each other with an incredible amount of inhumanity. That’s a terrible thing. It offends our conscience. But how in the world are American boys flying over Kosovo dropping bombs going to somehow stop something that’s been going on for 600 years?” [Des Moines Register, 4/17/99]

REPUBLICAN LEADERS IN THE HOUSE AND SENATE:

GOP House Speaker Dennis Hastert (R-IL): “Many may question the path that has taken us to this point. I have my own questions about the long term strategy of this campaign.” [Dallas Morning News, 3/25/99]

Then-House Majority Whip Tom Delay (R-TX): “Mr. Speaker, this is a very difficult speech for me to give, because I normally, and I still do, support our military and the fine work that they are doing. But I cannot support a failed foreign policy. ... But before we get deeper embroiled into this Balkan quagmire,

I think that an assessment has to be made of the Kosovo policy so far. President Clinton has never explained to the American people why he was involving the U.S. military in a civil war in a sovereign nation, other than to say it is for humanitarian reasons, a new military/foreign policy precedent. ... Was it worth it to stay in Vietnam to save face? What good has been accomplished so far? Absolutely nothing.” [Congressional Record, “Removal of United States Armed Forces from the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia,” 4/28/99]

Then-House Majority Whip Tom Delay (R-TX): The deployment of U.S. military forces in Kosovo is “just another bad idea in a foreign policy without a focus.” [Editorial, Saint Paul Pioneer Press (Minnesota), 3/17/99]

Then-House Majority Whip Tom Delay (R-TX): “America needs to quickly change directions and leave behind this chilling comedy of errors that has defined our foreign policy.” [Copley News Service, 3/22/99]

Then-House Majority Whip Tom Delay (R-TX): “First of all, it's using NATO for the first time to attack a sovereign nation. ... It's also one more adventure in a whole line of adventures of failed foreign policy.” [“Fox News Sunday,” 3/14/99]

Then-House Majority Whip Tom Delay (R-TX): “I had the utmost confidence in President Bush. He had laid the groundwork, and our national interest in the Middle East was clear. In the gulf we had a country that was invaded [Kuwait], and an oil interest to defend. ... [In the Balkans] we have a president I don't trust, who has proven my reason for not trusting him: had no plan. We have a civil war that was falsely described as a huge humanitarian problem, when in comparison to other places, it was nothing.” [Washington Post, 5/4/99]

Then-Senate Assistant Majority Leader Don Nickles (R-OK): “I think he's [Clinton] gotten us into a mess. I don't think you can bomb a country into signing a peace agreement.” [Washington Post, 4/13/99]

Then-Senate Assistant Majority Leader Don Nickles (R-OK): “The Administration, and NATO as a whole, greatly miscalculated the response Slobodan Milosevic would have to a bombing campaign. As I predicted, the Administration has escalated what was guerilla warfare into a much more serious conflict. The bombings have unleashed an evil reign and resulted in a humanitarian disaster.” [Senator Don Nickles, Press Release, 4/21/99]

Then-Senate Assistant Majority Leader Don Nickles (R-OK): “I want NATO to be credible, but for crying out loud, when you are so arrogant to say here is our wisdom, here is this accord, we determined this is in your best interest and you must sign it or else we are going to bomb you--I stated in my speech on the bombing resolution that I don't think you can bomb a country into submission or into signing an agreement.” [Congressional Record, Senator Don Nickles, 5/3/99]

CRITICISMS FROM OTHER REPUBLICANS:

Senator James Inhofe (R-OK): “(P)resident [Clinton] has decimated our ability to defend ourselves.” [USA Today, 4/5/99]

Senator Judd Gregg (R-NH): “I don't believe that a ground war in Kosovo using American troops is going to be very successful.” [NBC, “Meet the Press,” 4/18/99]

Representative Randy “Duke” Cunningham (R-CA): “This is the most inept foreign policy in the history of the United States.” [Washington Times, 4/29/99]

Senator Richard Lugar (R-IN): “This is President Clinton's war, and when he falls flat on his face, that's his problem.” [New York Times, 5/4/99]

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March 24, 1999 -- NATO began a strategic bombing campaign. [[Associated Press](#), 3/24/99]

- **March 25, 1999** -- The [Dallas Morning News](#) quoted GOP House Speaker Dennis Hastert (R-IL) as saying, “Many question the path that has taken us to this point. I have my own questions about the long term strategy of this campaign.” [[Dallas Morning News](#), 3/25/99]
- **March 27, 1999** -- Then-GOP Presidential candidate Dan Quayle criticized the Clinton administration’s Kosovo policy and said, “What has happened is we have taken a political crisis and a humanitarian crisis and escalated it into a full military crisis. The handling of the situation in the Balkans reflects the inattention of the Clinton Administration to foreign policy. ... You have the same situation [as Vietnam]. Ambiguity, no stated, clear cut mission and then you are going to have to be there quite some time.” [[Omaha World Herald](#), 3/28/99]

March 31, 1999 -- Three U.S. soldiers were captured while patrolling the Serbia-Macedonia border. [[Associated Press](#), 3/31/99]

- **April 4, 1999** -- Senator James Inhofe (R-OK) said, “We should not be in Kosovo, as we should not have been in Bosnia. Our concern is we should be able to defend America in the event something happens where our strategic interests are at stake, such as in Iraq or in North Korea. And this is just depleting and diluting our resources.” [[New York Times](#), 4/8/99]
- **April 4, 1999** -- While appearing on “Meet the Press,” Senator James Inhofe (R-OK) said the “President has decimated our ability to defend ourselves.” [[USA Today](#), 4/5/99]
- **April 5, 1999** -- Then-GOP Presidential candidate Sen. Bob Smith (R-NH) questioned the need to protect Kosovo. “Hundreds of thousands have died in Rwanda,” Smith said. “We’re not firing missiles there. This is a mistake.” [[USA Today](#), 4/5/99]
- **April 5, 1999** -- [USA Today](#) quoted Senator Richard Shelby (R AL), as saying, “Obviously, we are not winning the war.” [[USA Today](#), 4/5/99]
- **April 6, 1999** -- At an appearance in his hometown of Yorkville, IL, GOP House Speaker Dennis Hastert (R-IL) said, “The endgame should be, I think, to be sure we can get those refugees back into Kosovo and stabilized. I have my doubts about whether we are going to be able to rationally deal politically with Milosevic or not. I don’t know if that’s possible to do. But right now, I don’t think there’s much support for ground troops. I mean, I don’t see it here, and I didn’t see it in Europe. So we’re going to have to try to find the best way to solve the problem without inserting ground troops.” [[National Public Radio](#), 4/7/99]
- **April 8, 1999** -- The [New York Times](#) quoted then-Senator John Ashcroft (R-MO) as saying, “A lackluster air campaign has given the Serb dictator Milosevic time to achieve most of his strategic goals in Kosovo.” [[New York Times](#), 4/8/99]
- **April 8, 1999** -- The [New York Times](#) quoted Senator Chuck Hagel (R-N) as saying, “We’ve got a butcher loose in the backyard of NATO. If NATO can’t deal with this, are we living a charade that there’s peace and stability in Europe?” [[New York Times](#), 4/8/99]

- **April 9, 1999** -- The Washington Post quoted Rep. Dave Camp (R-MI) as saying, “Now that you see this refugee crisis, we really have to find a strategy to win in some way, whatever that means. We're all having trouble figuring out what a win is.” [Washington Post, 4/9/99]
- **April 13, 1999** -- In a speech, Representative Tom Campbell(R-CA) denounced the military campaign in Kosovo and said, “We are presently at war and it is an unconstitutional war.” (R-CA) [New York Times, 4/14/99]
- **April 13, 1999** -- Senate Assistant Majority Leader Don Nickles (R-OK) criticized Clinton and said, “I think he’s gotten us into a mess. I don’t think you can bomb a country into signing a peace agreement.”- [Washington Post, 4/13/99]
- **April 15, 1999** – In an interview on “Inside Politics,” then-GOP Presidential candidate Rep. John Kasich (R-OH) discussed the military situation in the Balkans and said, “I don’t understand what [the Administration’s] goals are. ... I am opposed to ground troops. I am for keeping the pressure on Milosevich but frankly I think we need to look for mediation. I don’t think we ought to look at opportunities to raise the level of violence there. I think we ought to look for opportunities to be able to mediate a solution.” [“Inside Politics,” CNN, 4/15/99]
- **April 17, 1999** -- GOP Presidential candidate Gary Bauer stated his opposition to the military campaign in Kosovo. “The President has not demonstrated he’s got a way to solve a crisis or conflict that literally has been raging since 1350,” Bauer said. “They treated each other with an incredible amount of inhumanity. That’s a terrible thing. It offends our conscience. But how in the world are American boys flying over Kosovo dropping bombs going to somehow stop something that’s been going on for 600 years?” [Des Moines Register, 4/17/99]
- **April 18, 1999** -- In an appearance on “Meet the Press,” Senator Judd Gregg (R-NH) said, “I don’t believe that a ground war in Kosovo using American troops is going to be very successful.” [NBC, “Meet the Press,” 4/18/99]
- **April 19, 1999** -- Senator Tim Hutchinson (R-AR) questioned funding the war in Kosovo. “We have increased deployments by 300% under this President while cutting funding for the armed services by a third. So I am probably going to vote for it,” Hutchinson said. “But at the rate that we’re spending, \$6 billion will not get us through this fiscal year to pay for this war.” [“Crossfire,” CNN, 4/19/99]
- **April 19, 1999** -- Senator Pat Roberts (R-KS) said, “We have literally planted the flag in the Balkan swamp, I do think its in our national interest, after talking with NATO Ambassadors, after taking a good hard look. It’s the future of NATO, it’s the credibility of NATO. ... I hope it works, I have my doubts.” [CNN, “Inside Politics,” 4/19/99]
- **April 20, 1999** -- Senator Pat Roberts (R-KS) denounced the war in Kosovo and argued, “The Administration has told us the U.S. has agreed to pay for 25 percent of the cost for rebuilding what we are now destroying in terms of a mini-Marshall Plan. I object to that. I do not think it’s appropriate for us to come in an rebuild that part of Europe when the European Union is healthy economically and certainly can do that job.” [Washington Times, 4/20/99]
- **April 21, 1999** -- Sen. Don Nickles (R-OK) criticized the Clinton administration’s cooperation with NATO in Kosovo and said, “The Administration, and NATO as a whole, greatly miscalculated the response Slobodan Milosevic would have to a bombing campaign. As I predicted, the Administration has escalated what was guerilla warfare into a much more serious conflict. The bombings have

unleashed an evil reign and resulted in a humanitarian disaster.” [Senator Don Nickles, Press Release, 4/21/99]

- **April 24, 1999** -- In an appearance on “Evans, Novak, Hunt and Shields,” Senator Richard Shelby (R-AL) said, “I don't believe we're winning it today. I don't believe that the Serbs are winning it either, but our air war has intensified some, especially this week, and if we'll keep it up for another two or three more weeks and not let the politicians decide what targets to hit or veto the ones that the Army wants go at, it could make a difference. I'm dubious, I'm not sure, I don't know of any air war that has decided a conflict by itself.” [“Evans, Novak, Hunt and Shields,” CNN, 4/24/99]
- **April 25, 1999** -- Then-GOP Presidential candidate Pat Buchanan said, “And **what are we doing bombing and attacking this tiny country that has never attacked the United States** to rip away from them a province that does not belong to us? **I believe it is an unjust war.** I think we have failed in our strategic objectives, and it is now becoming basically no longer a war for Kosovo but a war to save NATO's credibility and NATO's face. And that does not justify sending in an army of 100,000 American ground troops into the Balkans.” [NBC, “Meet the Press,” 4/25/99, emphasis added]
- **April 28, 1999** -- House Republicans undermined U.S. foreign policy by rejecting a resolution (S.Con.Res.21) authorizing the ongoing NATO air campaign in Yugoslavia. A Washington Post editorial said of the vote, “The Republican leadership has shown an amazing lack of leadership. Cowardice triumphed over principle. ... Those who will more likely suffer from this abdication are the NATO alliance, its military campaign, the Kosovars and, in the long run, the Republican Party itself.” House Republicans defeated the resolution 213 to 213. [House CQ Vote #103, 4/28/99; Editorial, Washington Post, 4/30/99]
- **April 28, 1999** -- Then-GOP Presidential candidate Rep. John Kasich (R-OH) was skeptical of NATO's military campaign in Kosovo and said, “The fact is the civil war in Kosovo has been raging since 1389. The fact is, our intervening in the middle of an ethnic civil war that has been going on for six centuries is not likely to be successful.” [New York Times, 4/29/99]
- **April 28, 1999** -- Speaking on the House floor, then-House Majority Whip Tom Delay (R-TX) criticized Clinton's decision to bomb in Kosovo and said, “Mr. Speaker, this is a very difficult speech for me to give, because **I normally, and I still do, support our military and the fine work that they are doing. But I cannot support a failed foreign policy.** ... But before we get deeper embroiled into this Balkan quagmire, I think that an assessment has to be made of the Kosovo policy so far. President Clinton has never explained to the American people why he was involving the U.S. military in a civil war in a sovereign nation, other than to say it is for humanitarian reasons, a new military/foreign policy precedent. ... Was it worth it to stay in Vietnam to save face? What good has been accomplished so far? Absolutely nothing.” [Congressional Record, “Removal of United States Armed Forces from the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia,” 4/28/99, emphasis added]
- **April 28, 1999** -- Rep. Randy “Duke” Cunningham (R-CA) criticized the Clinton administration and said, “This is the most inept foreign policy in the history of the United States.” [Washington Times, 4/29/99]
- **April 30, 1999** -- Commenting on the rejection of a bill that would have authorized force in the Balkans, House Majority Whip Tom DeLay (R-TX) said, “The President is not supported by the House, and the military is supported by the House.” [USA Today, 4/30/99]

- **April 30, 1999** -- The Washington Times quoted Rep. Mark Souder (R-IN) as saying, “How can we vote next week to fund a mission that we voted against this week?” [Washington Times, 4/30/99]
- **May 2, 1999** -- Then-House Majority Whip Tom Delay (R-TX) criticized Clinton’s policies in Kosovo and said, “The president said that if we did nothing, there would be a instability in the region. There would be a flood of refugees, Kosovars would die, and the credibility of NATO would be undermined. Well, **Clinton's bombing campaign has caused all of these problems to explode.**” [CNN, “Late Edition With Wolf Blitzer, 5/2/99, emphasis added]
- **May 2, 1999** -- Then-GOP Presidential candidate Bob Smith (NH) questioned the fate of the Kosovo military conflict and said, “I’m opposed to saying, ‘Let’s go in and win it,’ because I don’t know what win means. Do we go in and flatten it? ... I don’t want another Vietnam. I don’t want to have people say we’ve wasted a thousand lives for nothing.” [Portsmouth Herald, 5/2/99]
- **May 2, 1999** -- Senate Assistant Majority Leader Don Nickles (R-OK) criticized the war process in Kosovo and called for an end to the military campaign. “We need to try and achieve a compromise,” Nickles said. “We need a diplomatic resolution. Whether he personally meets with him or not, I hope this administration really aggressively pursues a diplomatic solution. This war is not going well.”- [NBC “Meet the Press,” 5/2/99]
- **May 3, 1999** -- Sen. Don Nickles (R-OK) criticized the Clinton administration and NATO’s military campaign in Kosovo and said, “I want NATO to be credible, but for crying out loud, when you are so arrogant to say here is our wisdom, here is this accord, we determined this is in your best interest and you must sign it or else we are going to bomb you--I stated in my speech on the bombing resolution that I don't think you can bomb a country into submission or into signing an agreement. I doubted then that Mr. Milosevic, after the bombs were going to fall, was going to raise the white flag and say: Now I see the wisdom. That didn't happen in Bosnia. It got his attention in Bosnia. In fact, the Croatian army was ethnically cleansing their own, and he was losing the war. He decided to be more interested in a peace agreement.” [Congressional Record, Senator Don Nickles, 5/3/99]
- **May 3, 1999** -- During an interview, GOP House Majority Whip Tom DeLay (TX) said, “We’re not paying for the air war. We’re paying to rebuild our defenses, which this Administration has gutted.” [Associated Press, 5/3/99]
- **May 3, 1999** -- Senator Richard Lugar (R-IN) placed all responsibility of the Kosovo military engagement on the Clinton administration. “This is President Clinton’s war, and when he falls flat on his face, that’s his problem,” Lugar said. [New York Times, 5/4/99]
- **May 4, 1999** -- In an interview with the Washington Post, DeLay was quoted as saying, “I had the utmost confidence in President Bush. He had laid the groundwork, and our national interest in the Middle East was clear. In the gulf we had a country that was invaded [Kuwait], and an oil interest to defend. ... [In the Balkans] we have a president I don’t trust, who has proven my reason for not trusting him: had no plan. We have a civil war that was falsely described as a huge humanitarian problem, when in comparison to other places, it was nothing.” [Washington Post, 5/4/99]
- **May 4, 1999** -- The Scotsman reported, “The Senate majority leader, Trent Lott, said at the weekend: ‘I think that, as Jesse Jackson would say, give peace a chance here. There seems to be some momentum. There seems to be an opportunity - we should seize this moment. As a matter of fact, you know, **I had doubts about the bombing campaign from the beginning. I didn't think we had done enough in the diplomatic area.**’” [Scotsman, 5/4/99, emphasis added]

May 5, 1999 -- Two American Apache crew members were killed in Albania. The American soldiers were the only NATO casualties during the air strikes. [[Associated Press](#), 5/5/99]

- **May 5, 1999** -- The [New York Times](#) quoted Senator Slade Gorton (R-WA) as saying, “We should not use Social Security to pay for a war in the Balkans.” [[New York Times](#), 5/21/99]
- **May 7, 1999** – Speaking on the House floor, then-GOP Presidential candidate and House Budget Committee Chairman Rep. John Kasich (R-OH) criticized the Clinton administration’s policy in Kosovo and said, “Escalating this war doesn’t make any sense because starting this war did not make any sense.” [[Washington Times](#), 5/7/99]
- **May 7, 1999** -- The [Washington Post](#) quoted GOP House Majority Whip Tom DeLay (TX) as saying, “While we may not support the President’s ill-advised war, we do support our troops. ... Without any coherent international blueprint, the White House has bombed its way around the globe while dropping troops far and wide for ill-defined peacemaking duties. This policy has gutted the American military, which now must be rebuilt.” [[Washington Post](#), 5/7/99]
- **May 19, 1999** -- GOP members of the House Armed Services Committee voted to prevent the use of any of the funds in the fiscal year 2000 defense authorization to fund NATO’s efforts -- combat or peacekeeping -- in Yugoslavia. Democratic Rep. Gene Taylor (TX) offered an amendment to remove the Yugoslavia funding restriction, but Republican committee members defeated the measure 27 to 31. [[CQ House Committee Coverage](#), 5/20/99]
- **May 20, 1999** -- While speaking on the floor of the Senate Banking Committee about funding air assaults in the Balkans, Sen. Phil Gramm (R-TX) said, “I don’t see how we are going to save Social Security if we keep spending the surplus.” [[Washington Times](#), 5/21/99]

June 10, 1999 -- NATO bombing campaign in Kosovo ended with signing of peace accord. [[Associated Press](#), 6/10/99]