



HELSINKI COMMISSION HEARING

UNITED STATES COMMISSION ON
SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE

Testimony :: The Honorable Steny H. Hoyer

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Ranking Member - The Helsinki Commission

The members of the Helsinki Commission are not of one mind regarding certain issues which come before us, such as the use of U.S. armed forces in southeastern Europe, first to make and then to keep peace. I have been an advocate of U.S. leadership and participation; without it, we do not know how many thousands more may have died and millions been displaced. Without it, our European alliance itself would likely be threatened to the detriment of our national interests.

That said, as Members of Congress we are all aware of the risks and costs of a prolonged presence in the region. I believe we are all of one mind that we want to see improvements on the ground to the benefit of the people living there that would also allow the United States and the rest of the international community gradually to disengage and to be able to say "job well done." It is a challenge, and we must be committed to persevering.

In no area is the need for improvement more critical than in the realm of law enforcement. Not only establishing a secure environment, but also establishing the trust of the people is critical if the political and economic situation in the region is ever to change.

That is why the work of those before us today, and the issues they have come here to address, are so important to this Commission. It has been their work that we have an interest in seeing succeed.

I also would like to welcome the fact that the OSCE is playing an increasing role in civilian police matters. I have been a particularly close observer of the OSCE for more than 16 years, and, while I do support U.N. efforts as well, I feel that the OSCE is unique in its strong focus on the human rights of the individual. It has adapted to the changing European scene and I hope it will continue to grow in areas like policing and police training.

And while much of the experience in this field so far has been in southeastern Europe, it should not be confined only to that region. As has been pointed out, human rights violations for which local police are responsible are too common in too many OSCE countries. Sometimes it is done in the direction of the central authorities; elsewhere it could be the lack of control, the prevalence of corruption and inadequate training. Whatever the cause, I am very

interested in hearing the views of our experts on how best to address this situation.