



HELSINKI COMMISSION HEARING

UNITED STATES COMMISSION ON
SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE

Testimony :: Hon. Ben Nighthorse Campbell

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Co-Chairman - Helsinki Commission

Mr. Chairman, today's hearing provides an important opportunity to take stock nearly five years after the conclusion of the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina, commonly known as the Dayton Agreement. We can each recall the vivid images of human tragedy that unfolded in Bosnia during the early 1990s. Those scenes prompted a spirited debate in Congress over the proper course of action to pursue. President Clinton, over considerable congressional opposition, including my own, chose to deploy thousands of American ground troops in Bosnia. No amount of hand wringing is going to change that fact. I supported the men and women of our Armed Forces deployed in support of that mission at the time, and I support them today, including scores of Coloradans who have served with distinction.

Nearly five years after Dayton and the investment of billions of dollars by the United States, thousands of American troops remain in Bosnia. Despite initial indications, the deployment to Bosnia has turned into the very kind of open-ended commitment that some had suspected at the outset. While designations changed - IFOR became SFOR - the deployment in Bosnia continued. Taken together with the latest iteration, KFOR, such deployments represent a substantial drain on military readiness and, as should have been learned from Bosnia, typically entail higher costs and longer durations than initially foreseen.

As the attention of the international community has shifted to hot spots elsewhere in the Balkans, those remaining on the ground in Bosnia have attempted to move forward. According to some of those experts, corruption - an issue of keen interest to me - has been singled out as perhaps the greatest obstacle to Dayton implementation. I look forward to hearing more on that point from our experts.

The reality five years after Dayton is that the leaders of Bosnia have yet to take full ownership for the future of their country. This status quo is neither in the interest of the United States nor the Bosnian people.

Mr. Chairman, I hope to come away from this hearing with a clear, concise understanding of exactly what has been accomplished in Bosnia, what is left to reasonably be achieved, and what needs to be done to make it happen.