

WASHINGTON – Unless European governments fulfill their pledges of aid to Kosovo, the U.S. will withdraw its forces from the Yugoslav province under a bipartisan amendment approved by the House today 264-153. U.S. Rep. Spencer Bachus (R-AL) is one of the sponsors of the amendment.

"This Congress cannot, we must not, allow our troops to be exposed to additional risks because our allies have failed to keep their pledges," said Bachus. "They made specific promises, and this amendment simply says they ought to live up to those promises.

"After the war, the Europeans pledged 3,883 policemen to help keep the peace in Kosovo. They have paid for only 1,878. The Europeans pledged \$410 million in reconstruction aid, but they have delivered only \$44 million. They promised \$140 to help with civil administration in Kosovo, but they've given only \$30 million," said Bachus.

"As a result, our troops are forced to fill the vacuum, performing extra missions for which they were not trained. Our troops are having to act as mayors of villages, arbiters of disputes and guard historic sites. This is in addition to their regular military duties," Bachus said. Bachus said these additional duties make U.S. troops more vulnerable to attack. "It's not fair that our troops have to bear an increasing share of the risks because our allies have not kept their promises."

The amendment, which was added to the defense authorization bill, requires the president to certify to Congress by April 1, 2001 that our European allies have fulfilled certain commitments for funding policing efforts, reconstruction and humanitarian aid in Kosovo. If the allies do not meet their commitments, the amendment requires a "safe, orderly and phased withdrawal" of U.S. forces from Kosovo. The amendment permits the president to waive the withdrawal for national security reasons, but limits this waiver to a maximum of 180 days.

"The United States shouldered the overwhelming share of the military burden in Kosovo. Our pilots risked their lives by flying 70 percent of the combat missions. In return for us carrying this burden, our European allies made specific promises to pay for the major share of peacekeeping and rebuilding in Kosovo. They have not lived up to their commitments and U.S. troops are forced to pick up the slack," Bachus said.

The bipartisan group that offered the amendment also includes U.S. Reps. John Kasich (R-OH), Chris Shays (R-CT), Gary Condit (D-CA) and Barney Frank (D-MA). The same five members sought approval of a similar amendment in March during consideration of a supplemental spending bill. That effort was narrowly defeated by a 219-200 vote.