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Kosovo Statement 10/13/98

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PRESIDENT WILLIAM JEFFERSON CLINTON
STATEMENT ON KOSOVO
THE WHITE HOUSE
OCTOBER 13, 1998
Before I depart, I have a few words to say about the situation in Kosovo.

Over the past few days, NATO's clear threat to use force moved President Milosevic from the battlefield to the bargaining table. The commitments he has made could lead to the peaceful resolution of a crisis that threatens stability in the Balkans and the lives of tens of thousands of refugees, many of them homeless. But for that to happen, we must now see progress as President Milosevic turns those commitments into concrete realities.
The cessation of hostilities must continue. The troops President Milosevic recently sent to Kosovo must begin to move out, and those already there must begin to come to garrison. The international monitors must be allowed to enter and be given full freedom of movement. Humanitarian relief agencies must be able to bring help to the hundreds of thousands of displaced persons. And serious autonomy negotiations with the Kosovars need to go forward.

As I said last night, we will not rely on what President Milosevic says, but on what we see that he does.
To that end, a key component of the commitments he has made is an intrusive on-the-ground and in-the-air verification system. It will include about 2000 international inspectors in Kosovo, who will serve as watchdogs to ensure that the cease-fire holds and Serbs forces withdraw, while building confidence among Kosovars to return to their homes. And it will involve unrestricted NATO aerial surveillance, to monitor compliance and quickly detect violations.
The international community prefers compliance to conflict. But in voting to give our military commanders the authority to carry out air strikes against Serbia, NATO sent a clear message to President Milosevic: NATO is ready to act. It is up to you to follow through on your commitments.
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Yesterday, NATO's clear and compelling threat to use force moved President Milosevic from the battlefield to the bargaining table. The commitments he has made could lead to the peaceful resolution of a crisis that threatens stability in the Balkans and the lives of tens of thousands of homeless refugees. But for that to happen, President Milosevic must turn the commitments he has made into concrete facts on the ground.

The cease-fire must continue. Over the next few days, we must see real movement. The troops President Milosevic recently sent to Kosovo must begin to move out. Those already there must begin to come to garrison. And humanitarian relief agencies must be able to move about freely and begin helping the hundreds of thousands of displaced persons.

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