

OPINION PAGES

Our VIEW

Operation last chance

NATO authorizes military action

Time has run out for Slobodan Milosevic and his evil regime.

The United States, along with its NATO allies, announced Tuesday that it will take necessary military action to stop Milosevic's ethnic cleansing of Kosovo, where the government is battling ethnic Albanian rebels.

A last-ditch attempt by the United States to draft a peace agreement Monday between the ethnic Albanians and Yugoslavia failed, which indicates the imminent threat of a NATO-backed strike against Yugoslavia.

British Foreign Defense Secretary George Robertson said air attacks on Yugoslavia could begin today.

President Clinton said the United States is committed to ending Milosevic's bloody war against the Albanians, not only because of U.S. interest in Europe, but also because the United States has a humanitarian responsibility as the world's superpower.

The United States has an obligation to intervene to stop Milosevic's war crimes against the Albanians — to stop the bloodshed that has killed thousands of people and forced thousands more from their homes.

"If Mr. Milosevic is not willing to make peace, we are willing to limit his ability to make war," Clinton said.

The Kosovars, who, as ethnic Albanians, bear the brunt of Milosevic's vile ethnic cleansing, signed a peace agreement under British and French foreign secretaries, which Milosevic's government refused to sign.

The Yugoslavian government's latest refusal to take the road to peace flies in the face of NATO, the Western nations that are united against continued Milosevic-led massacres.

But the international community must not be deterred by the threat of a large-scale war, as predicted by military experts, if NATO were to act in Yugoslavia.

Milosevic and Yugoslavia cannot rape, pillage, torture and murder for years, and have the powerful world leaders turn the other cheek.

British Prime Minister Tony Blair acknowledged that the human cost of sending troops into an area.

Despite human loss, Blair said, NATO and his country should commit to ending Milosevic's reign "to save thousands of innocent men, women and children from humanitarian catastrophe, from death and ethnic cleansing by a brutal dictatorship."

Though war is never without consequence, the United States, Britain and other Western nations are appropriately united in their resolve: Milosevic must be stopped.

As countless diplomatic discussions have broken off, NATO's Tuesday authorization of military action is now the only option to stop Milosevic's killing.

Lupo's VIEW



Flagrant foul

Ruling does more harm than good for athletes



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Another strange and confusing development took place in college athletics while you were on spring break in Florida. Or Cancun. Or Memphis. Or the south part of Lincoln.

A judge in Philadelphia (maybe you went there) decided that a critical piece of Proposition 16, a rule determining academic eligibility in the NCAA, was unconstitutional.

Which piece? An important one. The judge eliminated the standardized test as part of the requirement for being eligible to compete as a freshman in Division I athletics. The four plaintiffs who brought the case were black, and their lawyer successfully argued that these standardized tests are racially biased toward whites.

This I have never believed, and I never will. Blacks are just as capable as whites. The real problem here is that many blacks are not afforded the same education that many white Americans are. Not because they're black, but because many of them live in a socio-economic level that is not conducive to quality education. In other words, they are poor.

It is the greatest punishment our country can exact on these people, black, white or any other race. It is a problem that will persist as long as our fine taxpaying Americans choose to vote down inner-city school bond issues and vote up shiny new stadiums so the owner of the football team doesn't pack up and leave.

These standardized tests were not the problem. They never were. The problem is, and continues to be, that

we, as a populace, systematically ignore the plight of underprivileged youths in their academic endeavors. Me, too. I mean, it's not like I want to give up my life to go teach in East St. Louis for 40 years.

These people are ignored, until, that is, one of them is good in athletics. Then, you will notice, that the boy or girl nobody cared about suddenly has everybody's attention.

That's where Prop. 16 came in. It forced the students who were coming to these big colleges to be reasonably proficient in school. There was a sliding scale. To give you framework, here's a rundown:

To be eligible, a student had to have an 820 SAT score and a 2.5 grade point average in 13 core classes (math, English, etc.) The scale slides to a 2.0 GPA, but then the athlete needed to get a 1010 SAT score. There are numbers in between.

The judge eliminated that SAT score and the ACT equivalent score. It's gone. And with it, much of the progress made in helping these athletes, who were given up on most of their academic lives.

If an athlete wasn't eligible, they could have still been let in. But under conference rules, only a certain number could be allowed. In the Big 12, for example, only a few partial qualifiers (they got the GPA, but not the SAT score) are allowed. Basically, it's a move by the conference to say "Hey, we believe in stringent academics. No dumb folks allowed here."

Many people agree. Many in college say there's no room for dumb athletes who already get preferential treatment. I cannot count myself among them.

I believe there should no limit on the number of these athletes a school can bring. So they sit out a year. But they go to school and, for the first time, get the opportunity to learn from people who, usually, want to teach. This system works and has been proven to work.

Eliminate the standardized test requirement, and we just go back to the old system of taking anybody and forgetting about their academic responsibilities. We reaffirm the

notion that, yes, these athletes are simply not smart enough to make it, so let 'em in anyway.

I remember this system back in the early 1980s. This is the system that produced a guy like Dexter Manley, who got through Oklahoma State without ever learning to read and was drafted by the Washington Redskins without being able to write. This is the system rife with cheating, where schools picked up players that may not even have gone to school on a regular basis. This is the system that made guinea pigs out of athletes.

This was the dark ages, and one judge wants to go back to that. Fine. But not me. Me, I'd rather have more faith in the ability of underprivileged athletes to rise above their lack of privileges. Many don't want them to, or expect them to.

A system that is compassionate but fair needs to be adopted. And we were closer to that before this rule was appealed. It's unfortunate that the four black athletes who filed the suit simply reaffirmed the belief that blacks can't handle a bigger load, so they run to the courts. I know it's not true and so do a great deal of others, but many will buy into that.

And even more will assert that athletes are simply dumb jocks that need laws broken for them to get in. Not true, either. People who claim it should try living a day in an athlete's shoes. Not fun.

It seems that, more and more, we want to turn our backs on these folks. We argue and challenge and play the politically correct game, but when it's time to go up to bat, we won't.

By admitting that a standardized test is biased, we've admitted our ultimate culpability in a heinous crime: that we, the most powerful republic in the world, didn't care enough to educate young men and women to the point where they could pursue a future career; that some people just aren't smart enough, so we have let them in and just forget about them some more. We simply take the stance of: What can you do for me, athlete? as opposed to: How can we help you achieve it?

It is sad, indeed.

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