

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 11, 2026

The Honorable Marco Rubio
Secretary
Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20520-0099

Dear Mr. Secretary,

We write to you in your capacity as national security advisor and Secretary of State to express our deep concern regarding reports that the Trump Administration may draw down U.S. forces from the NATO -led Kosovo Force (KFOR) mission in Kosovo. At a time of heightened political fragility and growing malign influence in the Western Balkans, a premature reduction of the U.S. presence risks destabilizing not only Kosovo, but the broader region, especially Bosnia and Herzegovina. We urge you to maintain U.S. force levels to protect U.S. national security interests in the Western Balkans region.

Since its establishment in 1999 through UN Security Resolution 1244, Kosovo Force (KFOR) has upheld peace between Kosovo and Serbia and has most recently served as a critical deterrence against renewed ethnic violence and external interference. From its inception, the United States has championed KFOR within the NATO framework and bolstered the Kosovo Security Force's security capabilities, especially through its State Partnership Program with the Iowa National Guard. The United States provides up to 500 military personnel to the overall peacekeeping force of approximately 5000 military personnel - a small presence with an outsized impact. It is widely acknowledged that U.S. contribution is the backbone of KFOR's deterrence in providing strategic signaling to allies and partners and discouraging possible escalation by actors in Serbia or Kosovo.

Any reduction of U.S military personnel could have considerable implications not just for the operational capabilities of the peacekeeping force but weaken the role of KFOR as a political deterrent in maintaining peace and stability in Kosovo. Tensions between ethnic Serb communities in the north of Kosovo persist amid continued actions by Kosovo's central government that continue to aggravate communities. Given no meaningful progress in the Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue, a troop reduction removes leverage that could force a return to negotiations. Furthermore, a reduced U.S. presence may embolden actors who view Western disengagement as an opportunity to sow unrest.

The implications for Bosnia and Herzegovina are especially concerning, given that KFOR is the reserve force to support European Union Force (EUFOR) Althea in responding to any possible flareup in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In recent months, the leader of the Republika Srpska entity within Bosnia and Herzegovina, Milorad Dodik, has continued his secessionist rhetoric and institutional obstruction, despite the Trump Administration's October 29 decision to remove sanctions on Dodik and his associates. In fact, since dropping sanctions, Mr. Dodik has falsely alleged that he was still the rightful president of R.S., questioned whether Bosnia and Herzegovina should continue to exist, and as recently as January 30 has continued his calls for a unified front to initiate departure from the Dayton Peace Agreement¹.

Against this backdrop of escalating rhetoric, even the perception of American drawdown from KFOR may embolden nationalist agendas of actors in Kosovo and Serbia but also the separatist ambitions of leaders in Republika Srpska, undermining state cohesion in Bosnia and Herzegovina and increasing the risk of a political or security crisis.

Moreover, Russia has consistently sought to exploit fractures in the Western Balkans and weaken NATO and EU support in the region. In April 2024, Supreme Allied Commander for Europe Christopher Cavoli testified to Congress that Russia was actively inciting tensions between ethnic groups to undermine Bosnia's territorial integrity, which informed his decision to increase and bolster KFOR forces and bring more military equipment.² Furthermore, Russia has actively blocked recognition of Kosovo's independence. Given that recent intelligence indicates no change in Russian malign influence in the region, we should not reduce U.S. troops and cede any additional space for Russian activity.

We respectfully request clarification on the Department's assessment of the regional security implications of this drawdown, particularly regarding second-order effects in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In particular, we request clarity on the decision-making process and whether this decision is being made as part of the Trump Administration's force posture review. Additionally, we urge the Department to coordinate closely with Congress before implementing further force reductions that may carry significant geopolitical consequences.

As President Trump's National Security Advisor, you are responsible for safeguarding U.S. national security interests; in this situation we ask that you ensure that any consideration for a change in U.S. force posture in Kosovo is deliberated within an interagency process under your leadership. As members who have dedicated a significant amount of time to the Western Balkans, we welcome the opportunity to speak with you and discuss this matter in further detail.

¹ <https://x.com/MiloradDodik/status/2017232693541364103>

² "We are expanding the number of permanent forces" - American general talks about increasing forces in Kosovo" Periskopi – 4 April 2022 - <https://www.periskopi.com/en/We-are-expanding-the-number-of-permanent-forces.-American-general-talks-about-increasing-forces-in-Kosovo>

Sincerely,



Michael R. Turner
Member of Congress



Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator



Brendan F. Boyle
Member of Congress



Charles Grassley
United States Senator



Gregory W. Meeks
Ranking Member
House Foreign Affairs Committee



Thom Tillis
United States Senator



Rick Larsen
Member of Congress



Roger Wicker
United States Senator

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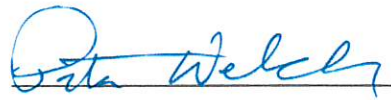
Ann Wagner
Member of Congress

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Chris Van Hollen". The signature is cursive and elegant, with a prominent loop at the beginning.

Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Joni K Ernst". The signature is cursive and bold, with a large initial "J".

Joni Ernst
United States Senator

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Peter Welch". The signature is cursive and features a horizontal line under the name.

Peter Welch
United States Senator