

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 25, 2023

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Biden,

We write to express our sincere concern regarding the deteriorating situation in the north of Kosovo, where recent Serb violence against NATO's Kosovo Force (KFOR) in northern Kosovo injured nearly 40 NATO peacekeepers. Since those attacks, we are alarmed by decisions made by both the governments of Kosovo and Serbia that continue to escalate rather than de-escalate tensions. We are especially concerned for the continued safety and wellbeing of the nearly 600 U.S. troops who serve within KFOR. We appreciate U.S. diplomatic efforts to de-escalate the crisis, but these efforts have not been reciprocated by Kosovo in particular. As a consequence, we are prepared to consider altering Congressional support.

The United States has a long history in the Western Balkans region. We were proud that the United States played a role in Kosovo's independence in 2008. We are also glad that the United States has taken concrete steps to build a relationship with Serbia. There is bipartisan commitment to maintaining strong U.S. leadership in the region, but also ensuring that our diplomatic capital can be deployed effectively to resolve outstanding issues between both countries.

We have been dismayed by recent actions taken by the governments of Serbia and Kosovo to jeopardize prospects for normalization by taking provocative decisions that threaten to undermine the prospect of improving bilateral relations. This includes the recent arrests of three Kosovo Police officers by Serbian authorities on June 14. The decision of Kosovo Serbs refusing to participate in local municipal elections, and the Kosovo government's actions to access municipal buildings through forcible entry has resulted in a dramatic escalation in tensions and violence that now threatens the fragile peace in the region.

We urge you to apply all diplomatic pressure to end this current crisis and resume progress on the Ohrid Agreement. We support the European Union's proposal to Serbia and Kosovo which include: a withdrawal of the remaining mayors from municipal buildings in northern Kosovo; a suspension of police operations in the vicinity of the municipal buildings with a concomitant end to public demonstrations, announcement of new municipal elections with the commitment of participation by Kosovo Serbs; and a return to dialogue on implementing the Ohrid Agreement, including the Association of Serb-majority Municipalities in northern Kosovo.

Without a firm commitment to take these steps, we urge you to postpone all pending sales of foreign military sales and any otherwise deepening of the bilateral security relationship with either country. We request that the administration provide a report to the United States Senate to confirm that both governments are exercising all restraint to avoid any action to unnecessarily undermine the safety of U.S. forces participating in KFOR. We are also prepared to review bilateral appropriations and annual authorizations to both countries as needed.

Mr. President, the United States has long played a constructive role in the region, and we want that involvement to continue. But those relationships must be built upon goodwill, meaningful cooperation, and shared values. We do not see this recent episode of tensions as a temporary aberration in the bilateral relationship; we see this as a defining moment in the trajectory of our relations with both countries. If the fundamental building blocks of the relationship are not reciprocated, we urge you to consider further steps to limit those relationships as we have outlined above.


Sincerely,



Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator



Christopher S. Murphy
United States Senator



Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator



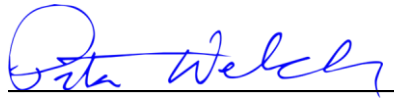
Benjamin L. Cardin
United States Senator



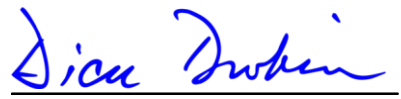
Pete Ricketts
United States Senator



Thom Tillis
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United States Senator



Richard J. Durbin
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