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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
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The Honorable Hillary Rodham Clinton
Secretary
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street NW
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Dear Secretary Clinton:

I have recently returned from a Congressional Delegation trip to Serbia, Montenegro, and Croatia that was led by Representative William Delahunt. From August 31 – September 1, the delegation visited Serbia where we met with senior Serbian leaders, including President Tadic, Prime Minister Cvetkovic, Foreign Minister Jeremic, , in addition to Parliamentarians and European Union (EU) representatives. In all our meetings with Serbian and EU officials, the delegation conveyed strong U.S. support for progress in Serbia's EU accession. I hope that you would agree with me that a stable Serbia is a prerequisite for peace and stability in the region, and that Serbia's future lies with integrating into Europe via EU membership.

As co-chair of the Congressional Serbian Caucus, I have had many opportunities to meet and exchange ideas with Serbian-Americans, Serbian representatives, and other experts who are knowledgeable about the region. From these discussions, and based on my recent visit to Serbia, I would like to offer my views on Kosovo and possible solutions to the current situation that I believe best serve our Nation's interests in the region.

As you know, I am in disagreement with Kosovo's unilateral declaration of independence and the United States' recognition thereof. This separation occurred despite concerted efforts on behalf of Serbia to engage in negotiations to determine a mutually agreed upon solution that would have ensured a peaceful, prosperous future for Serbs and Kosovo Albanians alike. At the time of Kosovo's declaration of independence in February 2008, I urged President Bush and then Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice, to work with both parties in order to find common ground from which to work toward a peaceful future. While I did not support our government officially recognizing Kosovo as independent (I was an original cosponsor of a House resolution calling for the U.S. to support a mutually agreed upon solution for the future status of Kosovo and reject an imposed solution), I am still hopeful that a resolution acceptable to all sides can be achieved.

Now is the time for clear thinking when it comes to developing a course of action in the region so it does not resurrect its history as a hotbed of regional instability and violence. Our overarching strategic goals for the region must be to achieve self-sustaining regional stability leading to democratic consolidation and economic revival; reduce, if not eliminate, frictions with the EU, Russia, and the Muslim world; and further lessen the demand and need for U.S. involvement, aid and resources in the region.

The just-reached international consensus that negotiations between Belgrade and Pristina must begin is a step in the right direction. However, these negotiations must not have preconceived outcomes and they must produce lasting results for peace and stability. Otherwise Kosovo may once again become a trouble spot requiring prolonged American and NATO attention at a time when we can least afford it. The status quo is an untenable situation increasing the risk of renewed conflicts in the region. As Kosovo reemerges from years of obscurity, it is necessary for our government to reexamine our options and long-term interests lest we risk becoming more entangled in the Balkans with no exit strategy on the horizon.

One of my paramount concerns about the future of Kosovo centers on the failure, to date, to establish an open, multiethnic and multireligious society within its borders. Although there has not been a return to large-scale fighting, the remaining Christian Serbs are confined to living in substandard enclaves out of fear of Muslim Albanian violence. Several hundred thousands of expellees – Serbs, Roma, Croats, and Jews – still fear returning. An estimate in the hundreds of Christian holy sites have been burned, blown up, or desecrated. It is my understanding that Albanian officials have expressed concern about the growth of radical Wahhabist influence, as mosques have sprung up to replace the destroyed churches.

The reality of any negotiations going forward is the Serbs will not waiver from their principled stand on Kosovo, just as the Albanians will not renounce Kosovo's declaration of independence. A fair – thus lasting – resolution to Kosovo should first and foremost take into consideration these facts. All other issues, including negotiations about territorial adjustment; compensation for the Serbian and other non-Albanian refugees from Kosovo; equitable settlement of mineral resources and other assets; and guaranteed protection of holy and historical Serb sites should all be on the table. To best safeguard any mutual agreements, serious consideration should be given to putting in place a binding international treaty to govern compliance. I believe that this approach offers a forward path that creates long-term stable conditions in the Balkans.

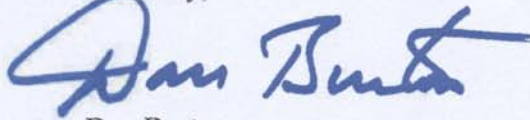
The proposals I have mentioned above are realistic and achievable; it is my hope that you will give them serious consideration as you begin to formulate the role of the United States in any future joint Serbian-Kosovo discussions. As one of the most influential countries in the world to recognize Kosovo's declaration of independence, we have a

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heavy responsibility to work towards an outcome that is acceptable to both sides. Doing nothing would be reckless.

Thank you for your time and personal attention to this important issue. I would very much appreciate receiving a response from you concerning my comments and the latest developments related to Kosovo.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Dan Burton". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Dan" being more prominent than the last name "Burton".

Dan Burton
Member of Congress

cc: The Honorable James B. Steinberg, Deputy Secretary of State
The Honorable Howard L. Berman, Chairman, House Committee on Foreign
Affairs
The Honorable Illena Ros-Lehtinen, Ranking Member, House Committee on
Foreign Affairs
The Honorable William Delahunt, Chairman of Europe Subcommittee
The Honorable Michael Turner
The Honorable Jeff Flake
The Honorable Steve Cohen