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BALKAN ACTION COUNCIL WELCOMES KOSOVAR ACCEPTANCE OF PEACE PROPOSAL, URGES SERBIAN APPROVAL

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WASHINGTON—The Executive Committee of the Balkan Action Council issued the following statement today welcoming the decision by the Kosovo Albanian people, and their delegation in Paris, to accept the interim peace settlement proposed by Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and the Contact Group:

“Today the Kosovo Albanian delegation to the Paris peace conference signed the proposal by the Contact Group, which contains five NATO members, for interim self-government and deployment of a NATO peacekeeping force in Kosovo. This is a major step forward in the undertaking to end violence and restore stability and human rights to southeastern Europe. We applaud the leadership of Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, the support of Bob Dole, and the wisdom of the Kosovo Albanian people in making this achievement possible.

Attention now shifts to Serbia. The proposal offers the Serbian people the chance to develop a new democratic relationship with the ethnic Albanians of Kosovo. We call on Serbian leader Slobodan Milosevic to match the willingness of the Kosovo Albanians to take risks for peace. Milosevic has so far refused this constructive peace offer, rejected cooperation with NATO, and massively violated the ceasefire agreement that he signed in October. Attacks by Serbian forces since October have displaced over 90,000 ethnic Albanians, including more than 30,000 people following the Rambouillet negotiations last month.

If Milosevic continues to defy the international community, it will be up to NATO to redeem its promises, and its credibility, by using military force to restore the ceasefire and implement the settlement terms already accepted by the Kosovo Albanians. With NATO about to celebrate its 50th anniversary, we urge the Congress and the American people to give their full backing to this initiative to sustain the vitality of U.S. leadership and the validity of U.S. collective defense effort in Europe.

(Signed) Morton Abramowitz, Zbigniew Brzezinski, Frank Carlucci, Max Kampelman, Jeane Kirkpatrick, Helmut Sonnenfeldt, William H. Taft IV”