

## McCloskey: 'shameful' U.S. record on Bosnia

Indiana Representative Frank McCloskey (D) delivered a blistering attack on U.S. policy toward Bosnia, during a House Foreign Affairs Committee hearing on the North American Free Trade Agreement on Nov. 5. McCloskey remarked that he had first felt proud when Secretary of State Warren Christopher said in February that the United States had "direct strategic concerns in Bosnia, including preventing the destruction of a U.N. member state by force." But, McCloskey continued, "unfortunately, the administration began an about-face soon after that was slower and more convoluted than the ones in Somalia, and was abysmally shameful. During the rest of the winter and the spring of this year, the Bosnian Serbs and their backers in Belgrade carried out the worst and bloodiest offense of their terrorist campaign by ethnically cleansing hundreds of thousands of innocent civilians from eastern Bosnia."

McCloskey reviewed how the administration had acquiesced to European objections to allowing the Bosnians to defend themselves, and then signed on to the joint action program, "a meaningless plan which called for safe areas that . . . are still not safe. In fact, 50 years after Buchenwald and Auschwitz, there are giant concentration camps in the heart of Europe."

"On June 29th," he continued, "because the United States declined to lobby on its behalf, the nonaligned countries' draft resolution to lift the arms embargo failed in the U.N. Security Council."

"On July 21st, Secretary Christopher said this administration was doing all it could in Bosnia consistent with our national interests. The very next day, consistent with that statement, the Serbs launched one of their largest attacks ever in the 17-month-old siege of Sarajevo."

"Even now, we won't lift the sieges," McCloskey said. "The U.S. and the U.N. strained even to avoid admitting there is a siege, to take necessary steps, including opening Tuzla Airport, to prevent people from starving this winter."

### Hundreds of thousands may still die

McCloskey concluded: "Genocide is taking place in Bosnia. Mr. Christopher knows this, but Secretary Christopher won't say so. On at least two occasions of which I am aware, State Department lawyers and representatives of other relevant bureaus have recommended that he state this

publicly, but we still do not have an answer. That request was first made publicly and in writing about 200 days ago.

"Mr. Chairman, I won't go on. I appreciate the time. But when the history books are written, we cannot say that we allowed genocide because health care was a priority. We cannot say that we allowed genocide because the American people were more concerned with domestic issues. History will record, Mr. Secretary, that this happened on our watch, on your watch, that you and the administration could and should have done more. I plead to you, there are hundreds of thousands of people that still can die. The people of Sarajevo are being besieged. One weekend about ten days ago, some 2,000 to 3,000 shells or more came down—"

**Rep. Lee Hamilton (D-Ind.)**, chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee: "Will the gentleman—[yield?]"

**McCloskey**: "One moment. The situation is even worse, as you know, Mr. Secretary, in the outer areas of Bosnia. We have to do something. The winter comes on every day. This is Nov. 2 [sic]. I plead for you and the administration to take a more aggressive interest in this."

"Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman."

**Hamilton**: "The time of the gentleman has expired. The secretary should respond."

### Christopher lashes out

**Christopher**: "Mr. McCloskey, you and I have got a fundamental difference of opinion on this subject. At rock bottom, you would be willing to put hundreds of thousands of American troops into Bosnia to compel a settlement satisfactory to the Bosnian government. I would not do so. I don't think our vital interests are sufficiently involved to do so. I don't see any point in our debating this subject further. You and I have discussed it several times in this forum. We have got fundamental differences of opinion. I do not believe that we should put hundreds of thousands of troops into Bosnia in order to compel a settlement."

"I'd go on to say, Mr. McCloskey, that it seems to me that your very strong feelings on this subject have affected adversely your judgment on other matters."

Later, in an interview on Cable News Network, Christopher was asked, "The reporters who were in the hearing room today said, at that point, your face grew red and you leveled what they said was an uncharacteristic, for you, personal comment directed at the congressman. What happened?" Christopher reiterated what he had said before and added, "At the end of the day, his proposal would require putting 200,000 or 300,000 American troops into Bosnia to try to take the country back—to put it back in its pre-war status. I simply disagree with that."

McCloskey was eventually able to explain, later in the House hearing, that he supported the administration's "lift and strike" plan, and had never called for use of American troops in the Balkans.