

Reassessing U.S. Involvement in the Balkans  
*Washington Post*, August 22, 2009

In his Aug. 16 column, "Ahead, for Once, in the Balkans," Jim Hoagland celebrated the 1995 U.S. intervention in Bosnia but omitted mention of its failures. The defeat of Bosnian Serb forces was achieved through a series of vicious Croatian ground offensives during the summer and fall of 1995, which were supported and to some extent directed by U.S. officials.

These offensives began in the Krajina region of Croatia and were extended into western Bosnia. They resulted in the expulsion of hundreds of thousands of Serbs -- thus producing some of the worst instances of ethnic cleansing of the entire war -- as well as thousands of civilian deaths. It was these events that made possible the November 1995 Dayton accords that Mr. Hoagland now celebrates.

None of these events can excuse the Serb-perpetrated atrocities at Srebrenica and elsewhere. But they were revolting nonetheless, and the Clinton administration played a key role in making it possible. Years later, we should not whitewash these atrocities.

David N. Gibbs  
Tucson