the country and then resume fighting. If withdrawal may well lead to another war, why does the Clinton administration remain committed to it.

Similarly, Secretary of State Warren Christopher has recently told Russian leaders that NATO expansion will go forward but was ambigious about the timing. Such hesitation gives Russian hard-liners time to whip up domestic public fears and to pursue a diplomacy aimed at defeating the expansion.

Moscow has already succeeded in prodding German chancellor Helmut Kohl to retreat on the issue. He had been for it but recently called for taking it off the current agenda in light of Moscow's attitude. To be sure, the impact of Russian policy in Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic and Slovakia has been largely negative. When Russian Foreign Minister Yvegeny Primakov visited Hungary last month, he demanded that Hungary desist from joining NATO; Hungarian Foreign Minister Laszlo Kovacs refused, reiterating Hungary's desire to enter the western alliance. Primakov was sufficiently jolted, to leave the door slightly ajar for a ''compromise,'' ''taking into account the concerns of all sides.'' But how long can these governments withstand Russian pressure? What alternatives will they be forced to seek?

Opponents of NATO's expansion say that the central European states should be satisfied with membership in the European Union and its security sub-group, the Western European Union. As these countries are beginning to realize, the European Union is setting economic criteria for admission that they cannot meet in this decade, and perhaps not in the next. They are likely to react by pushing much harder for early admission to NATO. If they don't get it, the only alternative for central European countries would be accommodation to Russian demands.

The hesitant U.S. policy on NATO expansion reflects anything but strong U.S. leadership. Why the delay? Several technical reasons have been advanced. The armies of these countries are insufficiently modernized to meet NATO standards. The military costs to their weak economies are too high at present. The cost to the United States of accepting the defense of these countries is too high. These arguments are mostly spurious

The external military threat to the region is so small that it imposes virtually no risk to the United States and its NATO allies for years to come. Moreover, the cost of defending the eastern border of Poland is far less than the cost of defending the inter-German border during the Cold War. And what about the more distant eastern border of Turkey we are now committed to defend? Nor is there good reason to demand that the Polish, Czech, and Hungarian armies meet NATO standards in the short term. Spain joined NATO without being able to meet them. And some countries already in NATO hardly meet them.

The real reason for hesitating on NATO expansion is fear of Russia's reaction. Admitting even three, maybe four central European countries, some administration officials believe, will strengthen Russian hard-liners, divide Europe, and provoke a milder version of the Cold War. This fear should be taken seriously—but only because the administration's policy of forbearance on NATO expansion is encouraging Russian belligerence.

In the summer of 1993, Russian President Boris Yeltsin told the Polish and Czech governments that they could join NATO if they desired. He returned home and reversed his position under pressure from hard-liners in his military and in the parliament. This apparently convinced the administration that postponing NATO expansion would strengthen Yeltsin and his liberal advisers. During the subsequent two and a half years, those advisers have been replaced by hard-liners, and Yeltsin now sounds like the Russian defense minister, Gen. Pavel Grachev, the ultranationalist Vladimir Zhirinovsky and the Communist leader, Gennady Zyuganov, all of whose bash NATO expansion. In other words, hesitation has strengthened precisely those Russian leaders it was intended to weaken. If Russia's intentions beyond its current borders are in doubt, the Duma's non-binding rejection in March of the treaty ending the Soviet Union should clarify Moscow's aims; today the restoration of the Soviet Union, tomorrow Russian hegemony over central Europe.

Most American opponents of NATO expansion insist that no Russian, now favors NATO expansion. This, of course, is true. The climate of intimidation that delaying expansion has allowed to develop in Moscow makes it unsafe to express honest views on the matter. In a recent visit to Moscow, I was told by two former government officials that the United States should expand NATO quickly right after the June presidential elections. That would take the air out of the balloons of the Russian hard-liners, and they would soon come to accept it. My interlocutors also confirmed my suspicions about the climate of intimidation that prevents them and others from speaking out in favor of NATO expansion.

All this is not to say that NATO expansion is simple. Legitimate questions can be raised about the security of countries not included, particularly Ukraine and the Baltic states. Still, leaders in all of these countries privately concede that a limited NATO expansion is better for them than none, especially if additional future expansion is not ruled out in principle.

The main purpose of NATO expansion is not primarily military protection for new members but to provide an umbrella that engenders confidence among democratic and market reformers and intimidates extreme nationalists who might try to exploit ethnic minority sentiments in the way former Yugoslav communists used them to create the war in Slovenia, Croatia, and Bosnia.

The opportunities for nationalist provocation are real. A large number of Hungarians live uneasily in southern Slovakia, in Romanian Transylvania and in northern Serbia. Russia has been pressing Poland for a ground corridor to its Kaliningrad enclave on the Baltic Sea (formerly East Prussia). A Polish minority lives in Lithuania, while Latvia and Estonia have large Russian minorities. Moldava formerly part of Romania, faces an uncertain status. NATO expansion is to preempt some of these problems and to give pause to those who might exploit them.

Indeed, we cannot afford to fall in Bosnia, even if it takes more than a year to succeed, any more than we can afford to encourage an irresponsible Russian foreign policy by delaying a limited expansion of NATO. The two challenges are a single piece of cloth. And they are the unfinished business of the peaceful strategic transformation of Europe.

HONORING THE EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY 1995 FOOTBALL SEASON

HON. GLENN POSHARD

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 30, 1996

Mr. POSHARD. Mr. Speaker, it has been a part of our heritage as Americans to recognize excellence. The American Dream is built upon the premise that if someone gives his best, plays by the rules and never gives up, good things will happen. Today, I want to talk about one such success story that occurred this past fall in Charleston, IL.

The 1995 Eastern Illinois University Panther football team had an outstanding 1995 campaign. Under the leadership of Coach Bob Spoo, the Panthers finished the season with a 10–2 mark—the fifth best record in school history—while qualifying for the NCAA I–AA playoffs. The team was cochampion of the Gateway Conference, and has won 14 of its last 16 games. For these accomplishments coach Spoo was named Coach of the Year by the Gateway Conference and the American Football Coaches Association Region I–AA and Co-Coach of the Year by the Football Gazette National. These are the results when a team has good leadership and is dedicated to striving for excellence.

Mr. Speaker, as their record attests, Eastern Illinois University has one of the elite football programs in the country. The Panthers have been an enormous source of pride for the surrounding community, and the prospect of spring practice is eagerly anticipated. I am honored to represent Charleston and Eastern Illinois University in Congress. I wish Coach Spoo and his players continued success as they prepare for another season in the fall.

HONORING THE SOUTHEAST VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT

HON. BART GORDON

OF TENNESSEE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 30, 1996

Mr. GORDON. Mr. Speaker, I am taking this opportunity to applaud the invaluable services provided by the Southeast Volunteer Fire Department. These brave, civic-minded people give freely of their time so that we may all feel safer at night.

Few realize the depth of training and hard work that goes into being a volunteer firefighter. To quote one of my local volunteers, ''These firemen must have an overwhelming desire to do for others while expecting nothing in return.''

Preparation includes twice monthly training programs in which they have live drills, study the latest videos featuring the latest in firefighting tactics, as well as attend seminars where they can obtain the knowledge they need to save lives. Within a year of becoming a volunteer firefighter, most attend the Tennessee Fire Training School in Murfreesboro where they undergo further, intensified training.

When the residents of my district go to bed at night, they know that should disaster strike and their home catch fire, well trained and qualified volunteer fire departments are ready and willing to give so graciously and generously of themselves. This peace of mind should not be taken for granted.

By selflessly giving of themselves, they ensure a safer future for us all. We owe these volunteer fire departments a debt of gratitude for their service and sacrifice.