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BENTLEY BLASTS CROATIAN HUMAN RIGHTS RECORD

Washington, D.C. -- Congresswoman Helen Delich Bentley (R-MD) strongly criticized the human rights record of the Republic of Croatia at a Helsinki Commission hearing on Yugoslavia held here today.

Citing the apparent unwillingness of Croatian President Franjo Tudjman promise to expand existing minority rights in order to gain recognition by the European Community, the fourth-term Republican stated, "The Republic of Croatia's record on human rights is dismal, not that Serbia's is ^{that much} ~~any~~ better. I think it is important for people to recognize this, and use appropriate caution in analyzing the current situation, or espousing support for one side or another in this bloody civil war."

The Congresswoman backed her criticism with a 14 page Amnesty International report that covered the first five months of the conflict, and numerous media reports.

Referring to this evidence, Mrs. Bentley stated, "Everything that I have brought up today is indicative of the mood of intolerance and revenge that has been fueling the current civil war, and of the misinformation that has been obscuring the many of issues that must be addressed if there is to be a comprehensive solution to the crisis.

The Maryland Republican continued, "The war started because of the human rights concerns of the Serbian minority in Croatia, and their human rights continue to be blatantly violated."

Pointing out the apparent intention of the Zagreb Government to renege on its guarantees, the Congresswoman concluded, "The most important U.S. policy goal at this point in time should not be to recognize Croatia, but to ensure the placement of U.N. troops to separate the warring factions and therefore protect the human rights

of all groups involved."

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