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November 15, 2024

The Honorable Antony Blinken
U.S. Department of State
2201 C St NW.
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Blinken:

As you begin the transition to a new administration, I write to you with great concern for the security of the Kosovar people.

The specter of Serbia's 1998 assault on Kosovo still looms large in the region. That attack failed thanks in part to intervention by North Atlantic Treaty Organization forces, but not before it left thousands dead and hundreds of thousands displaced. Despite its failure to absorb Kosovar territory during the war, Serbia's expansionist ambitions never waned. When Kosovo declared its independence in 2008, the United States and many of our European allies eagerly recognized its sovereignty. Unfortunately, Serbia balked at recognizing Kosovo's independence and has worked to undermine the nascent republic at every turn.

Serbia's militarization of its border with Kosovo demonstrates a lack of commitment to regional stability. One of the most dramatic manifestations of Serbia's quest to destabilize Kosovo came in September of 2023. Thirty Serbs barricaded themselves in an Orthodox monastery in northern Kosovo after ambushing a Kosovar police patrol. The ensuing firefight resulted in the deaths of four individuals and brought the two nations to the brink of a larger conflict. This incident illustrates that simmering tensions can boil over at any point, so long as Serbia's nationalist leaders work against normalization with Kosovo.

The belligerence shown by Serbia toward its neighbors would not be possible without the backing of adversaries like Russia, which has an incentive to sow discord in other regions to distract from its war in Ukraine. Given the President-elect's past soft-on-Russia approach, I fear that the next Trump Administration will do far too little to encourage peace between Serbia and Kosovo. I believe this will embolden Serbian leaders to chip away at Kosovo's sovereignty and invite further Russian interference in a historically volatile region.

Throughout this transition period, I ask that you use all instruments at your disposal to ensure that Serbia is kept at bay and unable to further encroach on Kosovo's territory. We also ask that you continue efforts dedicated to normalization between Kosovo and Serbia, as well as United Nations accession for Kosovo.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Richard Blumenthal". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Richard" being the most prominent.

Richard Blumenthal
United States Senate