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Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union
on recent fighting in Kosovo

The European Union is appalled and dismayed by reports on intensified hostilities in Kosovo over the last weekend which have - according to reports - left up to 450 people unaccounted for, several dozens of whom seem to have been killed.

The EU condemns the alleged recent infiltrations of several hundred fighters from Albania into Kosovo territory as well as the violence in the Albanian-Yugoslav border area and at Orahovac/Rahovec, and calls urgently on both the armed Kosovar groups and the Serbian authorities to exercise restraint and to cease hostilities immediately. The EU is particularly concerned that VJ shelling has allegedly violated the international border and demands from the Serbian and Yugoslav authorities an immediate halt to such action. It calls on the FRY and the Albanian governments to do all in their power to reduce tensions over Kosovo.

The EU recalls that violent action will not enhance the prospects for a negotiated solution of the Kosovo problem. Indeed, each individual casualty will render an early solution more difficult.

The priorities now are a cessation of hostilities and a start of a meaningful political process.