

Dole says no holiday shutdown

Associated Press

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should agree to extend the deadline and keep the government running. "Around the holidays isn't the time to be closing down the federal government," he said.

Dole said he didn't know whether Clinton and Congress could strike an overall deal by the deadline or be forced to agree on another temporary spending bill to keep the government operating.

Dole also said he believed American public opinion would begin rallying behind U.S. troops once the peacekeeping operation in Bosnia gets under way.

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Dole offers opinions on everything

By Guy Gugliotta

WASHINGTON — A few afternoons ago Bob Dole had it both ways. There he was, live on C-SPAN giving a highbrow speech announcing his qualified support for President Clinton on Bosnia.

Flip a couple of channels and there he was again, condemning movie violence in a videotape excerpt used on the middlebrow CNN show "TalkBack Live."

Teddy Roosevelt may have claimed the "bully pulpit" for the president of the United States, but in the electronic age, being the majority leader of the Senate is almost as good — especially if you're also a presidential candidate.

Pundits speculate that Dole, R-Kan., suffers from having his senatorial duties cut into his campaign time, but who else gets free nationwide television exposure whenever he wants it?

In the past three months, Dole's office has cranked out 53 news releases on subjects ranging from Bosnia to the O.J. Simpson trial and Cal Ripken's record for consecutive baseball games played. "I know that all members of the Senate join with me in tipping our hats to Cal," Dole said on Sept. 6.

During the same period, Sen. Phil Gramm, R-Tex., Dole's chief rival for the 1996 GOP nomination, produced 25 news releases. Richard G. Lugar, R-Ind., the Senate's other presidential hopeful, had 63, but these included a sheaf of policy statements in Lugar's capacity as chairman of the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry.

"When we (the GOP) became the majority, the demand for comments certainly didn't diminish," said Dole Press Secretary Clarkson Hine. "I'm not sure if there's a dramatic difference, but I assume it's more."

Hine, who has to be prodded to give his opinion on the weather, does not know (or won't say) whether Dole is becoming more voluble to promote his candidacy or to fulfill his leadership obligations, but "obviously he's interested in getting his message out."

Like every couple of hours. Since the beginning of September, Dole has issued at least two press releases on 11 different days, including four on Oct. 18 and five on Oct. 17, when the Senate passed the defense appropriations bill that funded four projects for Kansas.

"In my view, the Sensor Fuzed Weapon and the Combined Effects Munition are an effective use of scarce defense dollars," he said, and who's to argue?

"In my view," is Dole's favorite phrase, useful for everything from Sensor Fuzed Weapons to Clinton, who, "in my view ... has not yet made the case to the Congress or the American people" on Bosnia, Dole said Nov. 21.

But by Nov. 30, in the latest of 10 Dole releases on Bosnia, Clinton had done well enough to merit qualified support, even if, "in my view, the definition of success of this deployment must include a real end to the war."

Another Dole specialty is the "snarl clause," the nasty little aside that sticks it to the enemy — Clinton, tax-and-spend Democrats in general, or both:

"I've read the polls that say more Americans are blaming the Republican Congress for the (government) shutdown than are blaming President Clinton," he said on Nov. 15. "And if you think leadership is all about taking polls — as the White House does — then I suppose you can take heart in these results."

Dole promises government won't shut down again



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Bosnia an issue for Dole to rise to leadership

Most Democrats are shameless demagogues on the budget while behaving responsibly about Bosnia. Most Republicans are courageously reducing the budget deficit while demagoguing about Bosnia. Is America a stable democracy, or what?

On the Balkans, the sitting president has made his belated decision to intervene. Now the focus shifts to the shadow president; we will see how Sen. Bob Dole rises to the occasion.

For three years his position has been clear-cut and consistent: Lift the embargo against arming the victims no matter what our allies say, and strike from the air at the invading Serbs during Bosnia's buildup.

Instead, President Clinton committed ground troops to enforce a cease-fire. Now Dole has three choices: actively to rally Senate support for Clinton's risky mode of intervention; actively to oppose it as the wrong way to do the right thing, or passively to wait for the president to sell his decision to the nation.

Dole's remaining rivals for the Republican nomination — the firm of Gramm, Alexander, Buchanan & Forbes — have followed the polls into outright opposition. Evidently GOP savants see mileage among primary voters on this issue, and their candidates see a way of exploiting the voters' reluctance to be drawn into fighting somebody else's war.

Dole's initial reaction has been to waffle, letting the president stew in the juice of his own decision. Hence his pious reluctance to repudiate the president on foreign affairs; his frequent reminders that the Democrats did not



support a Republican president on the eve of the gulf war; his above-the-battle call for the president to "make his case," and — most dismaying of all — Dole's "I think we need to wait and see what the American reaction is."

For a man blessed with the word "leader" in his job title, and running on the need for leadership in the White House, waiting for public opinion to form is hardly showing leadership in action.

Dole knows from experience that getting the nomination means holding the line against a right-end run. But playing not to lose is not always the best strategy when your competitors — including your general-election opponent — are playing to win.

Dole should reject the timorous advice to distance himself from the Clinton gamble, with its promise of carping rights later. Instead, the majority leader should press his strength: proven patriotism and courage that obviates the need for macho display; skill in finding common ground and shaping support for a compromise, and a fine sense of timing about when to be a partisan and when to close a deal.

The strength of his longtime policy position is its clarity: Supply the arms and training to create a balance of

power allowing Bosnian Muslims to defend their country — and thereby deter further aggression after the peace enforcers leave.

That is precisely what is missing from the Clinton peace agreement. We have seen how weakness invites war; our creation of a balance of firepower is the essence of a successful "exit strategy."

Instead of a clear commitment to arm and train the Bosnians, Clinton offers only a fuzzy hope that the Serbs will disarm themselves. Lest the American troops not appear evenhanded, the Dayton plan promises that unspecified other nations may supply and train the Muslims in heavy weaponry, someday after six months. That way lies quagmire.

That is the place for the "Dole reservation" to the agreement negotiated in Dayton. In an interview two years ago, Clinton told me "the biggest single disappointment I've had as president" was the allies' refusal to lift the arms embargo that disadvantaged Bosnia; his reason for not leaning on Britain and France was an other-directed "we have a lot of fish to fry with the Europeans."

Now that Europe has pulled us in, Dole should induce the president to assure Congress in writing that specific arms will be in Bosnian hands at a time certain, with training camps located and financed. Details can be confided to intelligence committees, but the principle of self-defense must be locked in, guaranteeing our withdrawal timetable.

Then the majority leader can make a waffle-free endorsement speech and deliver worried GOP swing votes to a Senate expression of national resolve.

Bush, Ford back Dole

By Curt Anderson

WASHINGTON — Former Presidents Ford and Bush commended Senate Majority Leader Bob Dole on Tuesday for supporting President Clinton's decision to send U.S. troops on a Balkans peacekeeping mission.

The two Republican ex-presidents, in separate written statements, also urged Congress to adopt resolutions supporting the deployment even if many questions remain unanswered.

"To undercut America's course of action at this juncture would do enormous damage to U.S. leadership in the eyes of the whole world," Ford said in a letter to Dole. "We would be seen as totally unreliable."

Bush said "it would have been

Dole

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easy" for Dole, the Republican presidential front-runner, to take a partisan stance and do what Democratic leaders did five years ago in the Persian Gulf War. They voted against a resolution permitting Bush to take whatever actions necessary to remove Iraqi forces from Kuwait.

"I am delighted but not surprised that Sen. Dole has put the interests of our country ahead of politics," Bush said. "His decision may not be politically popular in the short run, but, in my view, it is right."

In his letter, Ford said Dole should be congratulated for his "statesmanship" and urged the White House and Republican-led Congress to work together.

"Your decision is in the finest tradition of foreign policy bipartisanship," Ford wrote to Dole, R-

Kan. "Your support of our military forces in this crisis will be most helpful in convincing Congress and the American people that the decision is appropriate diplomatically and militarily."

Last week, Dole said the deployment of 20,000 U.S. troops as part of a NATO peacekeeping force could have been avoided if the arms embargo against Bosnia had been lifted many months ago.

The civil war between Bosnia, Serb rebels and Croatia ended with last month's peace agreement in Dayton, Ohio, but a multinational force of 60,000 soldiers is arriving to enforce the pact.

Despite misgivings, Dole said that once Clinton made the commitment to send the troops, Congress should back him up. Dole indicated Tuesday that a resolution supporting the mission should reach the floor next week.