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Dole considering a visit to Bosnia

New York Times News Service

WASHINGTON — Sen. Bob Dole may visit the U.S. troops in Bosnia over the Christmas holiday.

Aides to Dole said Wednesday that the trip depended on two things: the status of budget negotiations in Washington and the weather in Bosnia, which has slowed the deployment of troops into Tuzla, where 20,000 Americans are to take part in a multinational peacekeeping force.

The trip could be considered a political coup for the Kansas senator, the leading candidate for the Republican presidential nomination.

His presidential campaign is emphasizing his service in World War II, both as a symbol of his patriotism and his ability to serve as commander-in-chief. Dole was severely wounded in Italy during the war.

The president visited the troops in Germany earlier this month but he has no immediate plans to go to the Balkans.

Dole will keep Senate leader post as long as possible

The Associated Press
WASHINGTON — On second thought, Bob Dole may stay on as Senate majority leader even if success in next year's early contests has him on track to secure the Republican presidential nomination.

When he launched his campaign in April, Dole said he most likely would step down if he won the Iowa caucuses and

New Hampshire primary. But aides now expect Dole to keep his Senate post as long as possible, perhaps through the convention, and Dole appears to be leaning that way.

"I think I'll wait and see what develops but I don't see any urgency," Dole said in an interview. "Nobody is pressing me to step aside."

Part of Dole's new thinking

reflects the calculation that he has benefited from his high-profile role as Senate leader while Congress debates a balanced budget, welfare reform and other major issues.

Dole said he believes his Senate schedule has hurt him when he needed more time to campaign in person. He mentioned straw polls in Florida and New Mexico.

"But I think for the general public, that I am there working on things like the balanced budget every day and they know it, it probably helps," Dole said.

Another consideration is the likelihood that the GOP contest could be virtually decided by late March, more than four months before the Republican convention.

THE DOLE CAMPAIGN

Golden ring of GOP nomination appears in Dole's reach

Decision to keep majority leader role has been a good one

By JOHN KING
The Associated Press

MANCHESTER, N.H. — The last time Bob Dole visited WMUR-TV, the studio suddenly went dark. So as he strolls in this time, Dole can't help but turn playful: "You got the lights on?"

If the Republican front-runner is getting nervous, he's not letting on.



DOLE

As 1995 gives way to 1996, Dole is solidly atop the Republican field, so close to securing the nomination he has long coveted that rival camps suggest he can't help but get the jitters.

Debates this week over Dole's positions on abortion and gun control have rivals predicting their opening may be imminent.

"You never know," says Dole, mindful of his sudden demise in 1988, when Iowa victory gave way to bitter New Hampshire defeat. "But I am in pretty good shape."

There's little arguing with that. Dole has raised \$25 million and en-

ters the campaign year with a significant financial edge over all rivals save multimillionaire Steve Forbes, who is using his own fortune to bankroll his effort. Dole also has built the best national organization, with the backing of 20 of the 30 sitting Republican governors.

While many predicted Dole was making a mistake trying to serve as Senate majority leader while seeking the presidency, he has used the post to dominate media coverage and insulate himself from suggestions he is not committed to the new Republican agenda.

Dole still has to navigate the bud-

get impasse, but "so far there have been no big mistakes," said GOP strategist Eddie Mahe. "You have to give Dole and his people credit."

Not that he has run a perfect campaign. Dole stumbled to a tie with Gramm at an Iowa straw poll this summer and created a controversy by accepting, returning and then voicing regret for sending back a contribution from a gay Republican group.

Another concern in the Dole camp is that he has lost his lead over Clinton in head-to-head poll matchups.

Some attribute this to reaching too far right to block a conservative pri-

mary challenger from emerging, others to rising public anxiety with the Republican congressional agenda.

But for the most part, things have gone Dole's way.

"The Dole campaign has succeeded on what had to be their No. 1 goal in 1995, avoiding having one candidate emerge as the clear alternative," said Gary Bauer, a former Reagan White House hand who runs the conservative Family Research Council.

Still, with seven weeks until Iowa's caucuses, Dole knows what lies ahead.

"They are going to hammer me," he says with a shrug.

Dole airs new ad touting his war record

WASHINGTON (AP) — Looking to solidify his lead in the first primary state, GOP presidential hopeful Bob Dole today began airing a 60-second ad that recalls his World War II heroism and says he is "ready to lead like few men in our nation's history."

Another GOP hopeful, Lamar Alexander, also purchased some new ad time in New Hampshire, placing a small buy for a spot criticizing rivals Steve Forbes and Phil Gramm for using ads to attack each other.

Parts of the Dole ad are narrated by the Kansas senator's wife, Elizabeth Dole, who says of her husband: "His story is really the American story: triumph over adversity, love of family, commitment to a core set of beliefs that have been tested in the toughest times imaginable."

Borrowing from a longer campaign video, the new ad recalls Dole being wounded in Italy during the war. "I couldn't move my arms, my legs," Dole says. Mrs. Dole then appears on camera and says, "Bob was paralyzed for a year and some said he'd never get out of bed. But they, the experts, didn't understand what a man like Bob Dole was made of."

The ad, titled "An American Hero," ends with the narrator saying: "Today these same values guide Bob Dole as he steps forward ready to lead like few men in our nation's history. ... Bob Dole, the character and courage to lead America."

The Dole campaign is spending roughly \$20,000 a week on New Hampshire advertising and aides said the new spot would be rotated with one already airing that promotes Dole's commitment to a balanced budget. It likely will be aired in Iowa as well, beginning next week, a campaign aide said.

The new Dole ad initiative comes as the latest New Hampshire poll shows Dole with a comfortable lead in the first primary state, with 35 percent of the vote, down one point from an early November University of New Hampshire poll.

But the poll, conducted for the Boston Herald and Boston's WCVB-TV, also showed millionaire publisher Forbes with 16 percent support, double his showing in the November survey.

Dole pressured to sign abortion pledge; gets conservative support

WASHINGTON (AP) — GOP presidential front-runner Bob Dole has refused for a second time to sign a pledge supporting the Republican Party's anti-abortion platform but said his words and record made clear he backed the plank.

The request to put his commitment in writing came from longtime anti-abortion activist Phyllis Schlafly and her Republican National Coalition for Life Organization.

She sent Dole another copy of the organization's pledge to support the call for a "human life amendment" that has been in the GOP platform since 1976.

In a statement, Schlafly suggested comments Dole made earlier this week had raised "serious concerns" about his commitment to the anti-abortion cause.

During Sunday's "Meet the Press" program on NBC, Dole said he would

not vote for a constitutional amendment banning all abortions because he supported exemptions in cases of rape, incest and when the life of the mother was at risk.

Presidential rivals Phil Gramm and Pat Buchanan seized on Dole's Sunday remarks to suggest he was retreating from the anti-abortion cause, and their allies in the social conservative movement have spent much of this week criticizing Dole.

Dole, the Senate majority leader, earlier this week refused to sign Schlafly's pledge, on grounds it would lead to a flood of requests from interest groups. He refused again Thursday.

TORY NOTIONS

Dole and political convenience

Will Bob Dole be strong enough to carry his campaign staff to victory?

WASHINGTON — Last Sunday the political community here read, with bemusement but not astonishment, a Washington Post story of a familiar genre. In it Bob Dole's successful year as a presidential candidate was explained with reference to the perspicacity of various Dole campaign operatives who had shared with the Post their praise of themselves for shrewdly positioning and packaging their candidate.

Because the story was 40 column inches long, many readers may have been immersed in it when Dole appeared on "Meet the Press" and made opaque remarks about abortion. The remarks were less important for what they revealed about his thinking on abortion than for what they encouraged skeptics to think about him as a man packaged and positioned with more reference to political convenience than convictions.

Dole said he is pro-life and wants to "discourage" abortion. When asked "But you don't want to make it illegal?" his thinking became impenetrable.

"Well, it should be illegal as far as Roe v. Wade's concerned."

Questioner: "Banned completely? No abortion, period?"

Dole: "With exception of life of the mother, rape or incest. You know, we have some exceptions."

Questioner: "A constitutional amendment to

ban all abortion?"

Dole: "I supported that one time, and I would not do it again."

Only once, in 1983, has the Senate voted on an amendment pertaining to abortion. It was this:

"A right to abortion is not secured by this Constitution. The Congress and the several states shall have concurrent power to restrict and prohibit abortion: Provided, that a provision of a law of a state which is more restrictive than a conflicting provision of a law of Congress shall govern."

That amendment, which received 49 votes (18 short of the number needed to send it to the states), would not have banned "all abortion," or any abortion. It would merely have restored the status quo before the 1973 Roe decision. Abortion would again have been broadly subject to legislated regulations. In the five years before 1973, 18 states with 41 percent of the nation's population liberalized abortion laws, and by 1973 two-thirds of all Americans lived in those states or within a 100-mile drive of one of them.

The 1983 amendment could have been supported by people who are pro-choice but who think Roe was wretched constitutional law and who resent the Supreme Court short-circuiting democratic decision-making. If Dole no longer supported that 1983 amendment, he would support Roe, which would be disheartening evidence concerning his constitutional thinking.

But Dole does still support overturning the Roe decision. The awful, and characteristic, muddiness of his remarks last Sunday obscured what he probably meant, which is that he once supported, but no longer supports, an amendment that never came to a final vote, one that would have banned all abortion.

Dole could have defended his position as follows: Given that even the mild 1983 amend-

ment did not come close to passage, it is a sterile strategy for the right-to-life movement to count on passing a much more restrictive amendment. Instead, there should be a comprehensive strategy to stigmatize today's policy — virtually unrestricted abortion on demand, for any reason and at any stage of pregnancy — as coarsening to the culture. And it is particularly cruel and unnecessary given the possibilities for adoption, and for dissuading, by assisting, women contemplating abortions.

Instead of making such a defense, Dole last Sunday merely said he did not want abortion to be "a dominant issue." However, he has made more likely a floor fight about the platform's abortion language at the Republican Convention next August. (Under 1992 rules, any group of five state delegations could precipitate such a fight.)

Dole's Sunday performance triggered news stories about him changing his views on abortion. There followed speculation that, so sure is he of the nomination, he has jumped on his bicycle and begun his victory lap, and begun moving from the right to the center. After all, months ago Dole flaunted that Richard Nixon letter urging him to do just that.

Voters, who think it is seemly for politicians to defer victory laps until some votes have been cast, enjoy sticking broomsticks in the spokes of the presumptuous. So Dole's campaign staff — they who embarrassed him by returning, without consulting him, a contribution from a group of gay Republicans — should devote less time to self-congratulation and more to helping him do what does not come naturally to him: be clear.

When, after weeks of private seething, Dole publicly regretted the affront to the gay Republicans, he made one thing clear: If he wins, it will be because he, like most who win nominations, is tough and talented enough to carry the burden of his staff across the finish line.

Dole cancels his trip to Bosnia

The Washington Post
WASHINGTON — Senate Majority Leader Robert J. Dole, R-Kan., Friday canceled plans to spend Christmas with American troops in Bosnia after Defense Secretary William J. Perry raised objections to the trip.

"I regret that we will not be making this trip," Dole said in a statement that included a copy of a letter from Perry saying that U.S. military commanders in Bosnia wanted to limit high-



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level visits until the troop deployment is complete.

Earlier in the day, President Clinton, who had also hoped to spend Christmas with U.S. troops in Bosnia, told reporters that he and Dole — the leading contender for the Republican presidential nomination — should postpone

their visits until they are certain not to interfere with the deployment.

"In terms of who goes to Bosnia when, I don't think we should politicize it," Clinton said while visiting the Pentagon for a 90-minute briefing on the Bosnia operation.

As recently as Thursday, Dole said he was hoping to leave

Saturday with an all-Republican delegation including Sens. Thad Cochran (Miss.), Dirk Kempthorne (Idaho) and Ted Stevens (Alaska) to spend Christmas Eve and Christmas in Bosnia to demonstrate solidarity with U.S. troops. He had planned to spend the holidays in Tuzla, the U.S. headquarters in northern Bosnia.

Dole may visit Bosnia over holidays

By CURT ANDERSON
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — If a budget deal is reached, Senate Majority Leader Bob Dole wants to spend Christmas with U.S. troops in the Balkans, joined by other senators.

"I'd like to go if we can just get this finished," Dole said Wednesday evening as intense budget negotiations continued.

The Kansas Republican said "five or six" senators want to accompany him on the trip, which would begin Saturday. He declined to name

them but said the group would spend Christmas Eve and Christmas Day in Bosnia to show solidarity with U.S. soldiers during the holidays.

Dole added that he had indications that Defense Secretary William Perry had some misgivings about the trip, but Dole didn't say why.

President Clinton had wanted to spend Christmas with the troops as well. But he was advised against it by U.S. military commanders, White House spokesman Mike McCurry said Wednesday.

"We were told it was a very bad idea because it would interfere with the deployment that is now under way and frankly, we would get in the way," McCurry said.

"I'd like to go if we can just get this finished."

Sen. Bob Dole, R-Kan.