



NEWS from U.S. Senator Bob Dole

(R.—Kans.)

New Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510 (202) 224-6521

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CONTACT: JANET ANDERSON
BOB DOWNEN

DOLE PREDICTS PANAMA CANAL TREATY CHANGES; CITES EARLY INITIATIVE

Senator Bob Dole said today that it now seems evident the Panama Canal Treaties "will not be ratified in the forms presented to Congress last September."

In a statement made before his colleagues on the Senate floor today, Dole recalled that he first proposed six Amendments and two Reservations to the Treaties last September, when many felt they were "impractical or unacceptable." Now, Dole said, "it is gratifying to note that the Majority Leader and Minority Leader, and even General Torrijos have expressed support for Treaty modifications." He suggested that his amendment approach "may well have set the pace for Treaty consideration in years to come." Dole has since introduced five additional Amendments.

The full text of Senator Dole's floor statement follows:

"Mr. President, it is now only a matter of days before the Panama Canal Treaties reach the Senate floor for consideration. The Senate Foreign Relations Committee will begin mark-up on the resolution of ratification on Thursday, and I understand the Senate Armed Services Committee will be winding up its hearings in the next week or so. By now, many of our colleagues have expressed their position on the Treaty issue, and the nature of the forthcoming Senate debate is becoming evident.

SUPPORT FOR TREATY REVISIONS

"Little by little, the Treaty modification concept has gained a following in the last few months. Some who once believed these Treaties to be essentially perfect now admit to certain defects. Some who once denounced Treaty revisions as impractical or unacceptable now appear resigned to accept them. In fact, in some respects, a "Bandwagon" approach now appears to be underway.

"When the Junior Senator from Kansas first proposed Treaty Amendments and Reservations in September 1977, there was no immediate surge of interest. By Mid-October, however, controversy over defense and passage provisions was strong enough to necessitate a 'joint statement of understanding'--a tacit admission by both the Carter and Torrijos Administrations that the Treaties required clarification.

"Now, it is gratifying to note that both the Senate Majority Leader and Minority Leader have publicly endorsed Treaty modifications. General Torrijos has expressed willingness to accept some Senate revisions. And ten members of the Senate have so far sponsored or cosponsored proposed Treaty Amendments. Many more have publicly or privately expressed willingness to vote for Treaty changes. In fact, just this morning, there are reports that the Carter Administration has finally yielded to popular support for Treaty modifications.

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"So there has been a lot of movement in that direction in the past four months, and it is an indication of recognition that these Treaties are flawed. It is an indication that these Treaties will not be ratified in the forms presented last September.

"Perhaps it is also an indication that many of the members of this body are ready to assert the proper constitutional role that Congress should play in the Treaty-making process. What began as a modest effort last September to reinstate active Congressional involvement in the international Treaty-making function has set the stage for Amendments to the Canal Treaties, and may well have set the pace for Treaty consideration in years to come.

REVIEW OF EVENTS

"Mr. President, I will briefly review the chronology of my activities relating to the Panama Canal Treaty issue, so that it may be a part of the permanent record.

"After a careful review of the two Panama Canal Treaties which were made public on September 7, I determined that I could not support the accords in their present forms. On September 23, I introduced six Amendments and two Reservations in order to clarify and improve upon the Treaties. My proposals address themselves to a number of issues, including defense and passage rights for the United States, the right to negotiate with any country for a new sea-level canal, extension of the transition period, reduction of toll payments to Panama, Congressional approval for the transfer of U.S. property, and protection of human rights.

"On October 5, I appeared before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee to elaborate upon my Amendments and Reservations, and submitted the text of a State Department cable which demonstrated beyond a doubt that American and Panamanian negotiators were giving different interpretations to certain vital provisions in the Neutrality Treaty. At that time, I commented: 'There may be a few members who would just flatly oppose anything, but I don't know of anyone in that category... I believe that if the proper changes were made, the Treaties would have widespread support.' Despite State Department intimidation efforts, I insisted upon the public's 'right to know' about the dangerous ambiguities in the Treaties.

"On October 13, I advised the Senate of allegations that General Omar Torrijos and other members of his family have been involved in drug-trafficking operations in the Western Hemisphere. The following day, I submitted a 'Freedom of Information' request to the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration, requesting specific files which I still believe may contain information on this subject. Despite my repeated efforts to obtain these files, the Administration has refused to turn over the bulk of Government materials on the Torrijos drug connection. Files have been withheld on the basis of 'National Security' and 'Sensitive Foreign Policy Matters.' I now have an appeal pending with the Department of Justice on this subject, which certainly would expose some light on the integrity of the Panamanian Government.

"Three days after the Carter-Torrijos 'Statement of Understanding' was released, I introduced two additional Amendments containing the identical language of that statement. I pointed out that 'The Joint Statement, by itself, is not legally binding. And the Joint Agreement disproves the notion that renegotiation of certain Treaty provisions is impossible.' I have believed from the beginning that that statement should be made a part of the Treaty language itself, and I am pleased that so many others are finally coming around to that point of view.

"During late December, Senator Paul Laxalt and myself spent two days in Panama familiarizing ourselves with the operation of the Panama Canal, and discussing Treaty provisions with local employees, civic councils, Canal Zone Government Officials, and with General Torrijos. My earlier concerns about the Treaties were reaffirmed as a result of that trip.

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"Most recently, on January 19, I introduced three additional Amendments to the Treaty which, in my opinion, will better protect our national interests in the area. These Amendments would authorize a separate base agreement to permit U.S. retention of some military installations in Panama after the year 2000, and would prohibit the presence of any military troops or bases in Panama--other than those of the United States and Panama--after ratification of the Treaties.

FULL DEBATE ENSURED

"We can expect to see more Treaty Amendments and Reservations introduced in the next few days. This is useful, for it ensures that the Senate will give its most careful review to the details of the Treaties. It also ensures that there will be full debate on Treaty provisions, along with efforts to clarify ambiguities and compensate for omissions. I look forward to continuing my long-standing efforts to insist upon substantive guarantees and protections within the Treaties. I hope more of my colleagues will join me in those efforts."