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NEWS from U.S. Senator Bob Dole

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SATURDAY, MARCH 11, 1978 BOB DOWNEN

DOLE URGES "UNDECIDED" SENATORS TO BACK AMENDMENT ELIMINATING RESTRICTIONS ON NEW CANAL

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- Senator Bob Dole today contacted six Senators still "undecided" on the Panama Canal Treaties, to invite their cosponsorship of his amendment to eliminate restrictions on construction of a new sea-level canal.

Responding to media reports that President Carter's latest "strategy" for gaining support for the treaties includes acceptance of such an amendment, Senator Dole said he assumes the White House "would have no real objection to Senate adoption of my amendment." The Dole amendment introduced September 23 and reintroduced January 19 of this year, would eliminate that portion of the Panama Canal Treaty which says "the United States of America shall not negotiate with third States for the right to construct an interoceanic canal on any other route in the Western Hemisphere" outside Panama.

Senator Dole said he also hopes to have another opportunity to press for a treaty amendment permitting continued American military presence in Panama after the year 2000 "whenever both nations agree to it." On Friday, a Dole amendment to this effect was tabled by a vote of 45-37. It appears that undecided Senators are concerned about this point, and that the White House may endorse a treaty reservation similar to Dole's amendment.

"Gradually, the White House is coming around to the treaty modifications that I and other Senators insisted upon last fall," Dole said. "We saw it happen with the Neutrality guarantee and Priority passage rights. Now, the President appears to be admitting to the advantages of base rights after 2000 and broader negotiation rights for a new sea-level Canal." However, Dole said it is important that the Senate not be persuaded to "beg off" with treaty reservations, understandings or declarations, which have no legal effect and simply express United States concerns.

Dole's letters today went to Senators Long, Talmadge, Nunn, Ford, DeConcini and Brooke.