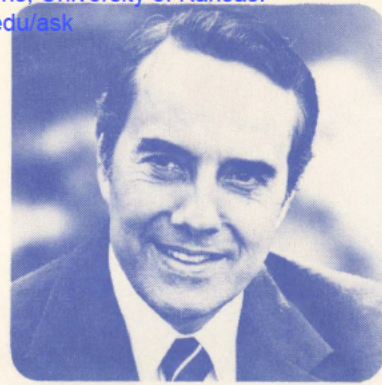


BOB DOLE



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CONGRESS MUST ACCEPT BLAME FOR SOME OF VOLUNTEER ARMY'S FAILURES, DOLE SAYS

WASHINGTON -- Senator Bob Dole (R-Kan.) today blamed Congress for much of the failure of the current all-volunteer Army.

"If we ran a business in this manner, I can assure you we wouldn't be in business very long," he said.

Dole, one of the opponents of a call for slashing the Army's personnel by 25,000, questioned whether Congress has given the all-volunteer Army the chance it has needed to succeed.

"This Congress has publicly criticized the Army leadership for failing to give an honest appraisal of the ability of our men and women in uniform," he said. "There may be merit to some of that criticism, but if we are seeking to find fault, perhaps we should begin by reviewing the actions of the Congress. The first point of contention is that I would suggest that there are some who are so determined to see the all-volunteer concept fail that it has never had a real chance to succeed."

Dole spoke out strongly against a reduction in forces at this time.

"The committee (Armed Services), because of its serious concern for the need to maintain quality standards, proposes to reduce the active Army's end strength by 25,000," Dole said. "I believe that such a drastic reduction at this time of increased international tension is militarily imprudent, diplomatically unwise and administratively impractical.

"In the years since we began the effort to gain volunteers, rather than draft our soldiers, we have seen fit to reduce the Army's recruiting funding by approximately 28 percent in constant dollars. I strongly suggest that the design here was one of almost guaranteed failure.

"During the same period, we have attached budgeting constraints which disallowed the flexibility needed to exploit market conditions for recruiting. Reprogramming actions, pursued through long and laborious processes, which we ourselves have mandated, mean that sorely needed funds, even when approved, are likely to be provided after the ideal conditions for recruiting are gone.

"We have terminated the GI Bill as an institutional benefit. We have allowed pay and compensation for our soldiers to fall far below the comparability levels -- levels we knew were essential to make the volunteer concept work -- that our young people sought opportunity elsewhere. And opportunity was available. We saw a decrease in unemployment levels among the young during those years which compounded the problem, and, in fact, led many who were in the service to leave for better jobs.

"I still find it difficult to see the logic in this proposed 25,000 cut in manpower. If those we want are better educated, surely they are bright enough to see that the benefits of soldiering don't measure up to what they can achieve in the civilian sector. Very simply, the ones that we want to join the Army won't, and the others can't.

"What we must do, without any further delay, is meet the obligations of providing the comparability standards which will make the volunteer force work. We need to re-institute a GI Bill which will be recognized as an institutional benefit, by parents as well as potential recruits. We need to provide adequate pay and compensation for our soldiers at levels truly competitive with civilian jobs. We need to express confidence in our Army leadership, and assist them in gaining public support in such things as access to high schools for recruiting purposes. We need to fund the recruiting effort in a manner that assures the same flexibility for expenditures that we would demand in our own business. We need to quit wringing our hands and pointing our finger, unless we stand before a mirror."