

News from Senator

BOB DOLE



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DOLE CALLS FOR PROSECUTION OF RELEASED CUBAN PRISONERS

WASHINGTON -- Senator Bob Dole (R.-Kansas) today called for "immediate prosecution of any U.S. citizen released from Cuban jails who may have violated federal laws."

Dole reacted to the decision by Cuban Premier Fidel Castro to release all Americans presently held in Cuban prisons, saying "Many of these prisoners are suspected of hijacking American airliners to Havana at great danger to hundreds of civilian passengers. Many others may have been involved in the large drug trade from South America. Others may be totally innocent; they all deserve fair trials -- but the first act of the U.S. government ought to be to arrest them for future prosecution."

Should Seek Extradition

"So far the only reaction by our government has been to say it will warn the released prisoners they may face jail if they come here," Dole said. "The Cuban government said it would send these people wherever they wanted to go. That's fine. But instead of warning them not to come here we ought to be prepared to seek extradition of these criminals from whatever country they go to. They may have been in Cuban jails but they broke U.S. laws, endangered U.S. lives and property in some cases and they ought to face U.S. justice."

Political Gains Questioned

Dole doubted that there would be "any political fallout this close to the election" over Castro's apparent wish to present his country in a favorable light, "especially after all the refugee problems he saddled us with last spring." As a member of the Judiciary Committee, Senator Dole was heavily involved in Senate hearings on the Cuban refugees during the last session of Congress. "Castro said he didn't want to strain U.S.-Cuban relations any further or to become an issue that would damage President Carter's re-election campaign, but the Administration's Cuban policy has been bankrupt from the beginning, and I believe the American public is aware of it," Dole said.

"A year ago Jimmy Carter said the presence of a Soviet combat brigade in Cuba was 'unacceptable', which made fine-looking headlines at the time, but those troops are still there today, and just held combat training maneuvers a couple of months ago."

Dole introduced a measure last year that would have barred consideration in the Senate of the SALT II Treaty with Russia until the troops were removed from Cuba, or until the President certified they presented no threat to the Western hemisphere.

"The President's handling of the refugee crisis was a disgrace and marred by personal politics," Dole charged. "His latest ploy was to try and ship some of the most troublesome refugees from crucial election states to Puerto Rico, which has no votes in the electoral college."

"Like all his other foreign policies, the Administration's approach to Cuba has been characterized by indecision, flip-flops and empty rhetoric," said Dole.