

BOB DOLE



(R - Kansas)

SH 141 Hart Building, Washington, D.C. 20510

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CONTACT: WALT RIKER,
DALE TATE 202/224-3135

STATEMENT OF SENATE MAJORITY LEADER BOB DOLE

LIBYAN PROVOCATIONS AND THE AMERICAN RESPONSE

NEW CRISIS IN GULF OF SIDRA

YESTERDAY I DISCUSSED THE SERIOUS SITUATION IN CENTRAL AMERICA AND CHARACTERIZED OUR VOTE ON CONTRA AID AS PERHAPS THE MOST IMPORTANT FOREIGN POLICY DECISION WE WILL TAKE THIS SESSION. IT IS IN THE NATURE OF FOREIGN RELATIONS IN OUR VOLATILE WORLD THAT TODAY I RISE TO DISCUSS A NEW CRISIS, IN A DIFFERENT PART OF THE WORLD, WHERE IMPORTANT NATIONAL INTERESTS ARE AGAIN AT STAKE AND WHERE AMERICAN RESOLVE IS AGAIN BEING TESTED.

LIBYAN ATTACKS AND OUR RESPONSE

THE RENEGADE REGIME OF COLONEL KADDAFI, IN VIOLATION OF INTERNATIONAL LAW AND IN DIRECT CHALLENGE TO OUR WILL AND OUR POWER, HAS LAUNCHED A SERIES OF MISSILE ATTACKS -- THE COUNT THIS MORNING HAS REACHED A DOZEN -- ON U.S. AIRCRAFT IN THE REGION OF THE GULF OF SIDRA. THE FIRST SUCH ATTACKS WERE AGAINST AMERICAN PLANES OPERATING NOT ONLY IN INTERNATIONAL AIRSPACE BUT OUTSIDE THE SO-CALLED LINE OF DEATH THAT KADDAFI HAS ILLEGALLY CLAIMED AS WITHIN LIBYA'S CONTROL.

OUR RESPONSE HAS BEEN SWIFT, EFFECTIVE AND MEASURED. WE HAVE STRUCK TWICE AGAINST THE MISSILE INSTALLATION FROM WHICH THE LIBYAN SAMs WERE LAUNCHED, AND WE HAVE ATTACKED -- AND APPARENTLY SUNK OR SERIOUSLY DAMAGED -- FOUR MISSILE-BEARING FAST PATROL BOATS WHICH WERE THREATENING OUR NAVAL FORCES IN THE GULF OF SIDRA. AND I SHOULD ADD THE THREAT FROM THOSE PATROL BOATS IS REAL -- THEY ARE THE SAME TYPE INVOLVED IN SINKING AN ISRAELI DESTROYER DURING AN EARLIER ENGAGEMENT IN THE REGION.

(MORE)

KADDAFI'S NEW THREATS

THE SITUATION REMAINS EXTREMELY TENSE. KADDAFI HAS LASHED OUT WITH HIS USUAL ARRAY OF THREATS, INCLUDING A THREAT TO LAUNCH TERRORIST ASSAULTS ON OUR "INTERESTS" AROUND THE WORLD. IT IS UNCLEAR WHETHER HE WILL FOLLOW THROUGH ON THESE THREATS OR LAUNCH ADDITIONAL MILITARY ATTACKS IN THE GULF. BUT IT IS CLEAR THAT, IF HE DOES, WE WILL RESPOND AS WE SHOULD AND AS WE HAVE -- WITH FOCUSED FORCE, IN DEFENSE OF OUR RIGHTS AND OUR INTERESTS, AND WITH FULL REGARD FOR AVOIDING UNNECESSARY DAMAGE TO CIVILIANS OR NON-MILITARY INSTALLATIONS.

AT STAKE: OUR RIGHTS AND OUR RESOLVE

WHAT IS AT STAKE IN THE GULF OF SIDRA? FIRST, OUR RIGHT -- AND, INDEED, THE RIGHT OF ANY SOVEREIGN NATION -- TO SEND OUR SHIPS THROUGH INTERNATIONAL WATERS. THAT IS A RIGHT WE MUST PROTECT IF WE ARE TO REMAIN A CREDIBLE MILITARY POWER IN THE WORLD AND IF WE ARE TO RETAIN THE ABILITY TO PROTECT OUR FAR-FLUNG INTERESTS. IT IS A RIGHT WE INSIST ON, AND WE TEST, IN WATERS AROUND THE GLOBE, WHEREVER IT IS OR MIGHT BE CHALLENGED. BY TESTING THIS RIGHT, WE ARE NOT CHALLENGING OR PROVOKING KADDAFI. BY ATTACKING US WHEN WE ARE EXERCISING THIS RIGHT, KADDAFI IS CHALLENGING AND PROVOKING US.

AND SO, A SECOND, AND EVEN MORE IMPORTANT, THING IS AT STAKE -- OUR NATIONAL RESOLVE: OUR RESOLVE TO INSIST ON OUR RIGHTS; TO DEFEND OUR INTERESTS; TO RESPOND TO ATTACK. WE HAVE FOR A LONG TIME -- PERHAPS TOO LONG A TIME -- SUFFERED LIBYAN ATTACKS, LIBYAN-SPONSORED TERROR, LIBYAN THREATS AND LIBYAN INSULTS. WE HAVE SHOWN ENORMOUS PATIENCE AND FOREBEARANCE. BUT IT IS NOW CLEAR THAT KADDAFI HAS MISINTERPRETED OUR FOREBEARANCE AS A LACK OF WILL OR DETERMINATION. AS HE COUNTS HIS LOSSES THIS MORNING, HE SHOULD NO LONGER DOUBT OUR ABILITY AND OUR WILLINGNESS TO RESPOND WHEN HE GIVES US NO OTHER CHOICE.

AND IF HE FOLLOWS THROUGH ON HIS THREATS -- WHETHER TO CONTINUE ATTACKS ON OUR FORCES IN THE GULF OR TO LAUNCH TERRORIST ASSAULTS ON OUR INSTALLATIONS AND PERSONNEL ELSEWHERE -- HE SHOULD NOW KNOW THAT WE WILL RESPOND -- IN KIND, AT THE SOURCE, AND WITH EFFECT. FROM NOW ON, IF KADDAFI WANTS TO PLAY, HE WILL PAY.

AMERICANS ARE UNITED

AND LET ONE FINAL MESSAGE GO OUT TO KADDAFI TODAY, LOUD AND CLEAR. ON THIS ISSUE, AMERICANS ARE UNITED, REPUBLICANS AND DEMOCRATS ALIKE. WE WILL NOT YIELD OUR RIGHTS; WE WILL NOT TOLERATE ATTACKS; WE WILL NOT GIVE IN TO THREATS AND INTIMIDATION; WE WILL DEFEND OUR INTERESTS. WE SUPPORT OUR PRESIDENT; WE APPLAUD HIS ACTION; AND WE WILL CONTINUE TO ACT WITH UNITY AND DETERMINATION, UNTIL THIS CRISIS IS RESOLVED AND UNTIL OUR RIGHTS AND INTERESTS ARE AGAIN SECURE.