

Bob Dole



NEWS

U.S. SENATOR FOR KANSAS

FROM:

SENATE REPUBLICAN LEADER

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Contact: Clarkson Hine
(202) 224-5358

U.N. PEACEKEEPING: GEORGIA

USE FOREIGN AID TO PAY U.S. COSTS OF GEORGIA U.N. OPERATION:
DON'T SANCTION RUSSIAN RE-OCCUPATION OF FORMER SOVIET REPUBLIC

WASHINGTON -- Senate Republican Leader Bob Dole made the following remarks on the Senate floor late Tuesday:

On Monday, President Clinton announced that the United States will be inclined to support a U.N. peacekeeping operation in Georgia if a peace settlement is reached. Such an operation would -- if it includes Russian forces as planned -- be a major landmark in our national security policy.

It would be the first U.N. operation in the territory of the former Soviet Union. It would be the first U.N. approval for the Russians in a former colony. It would be the first direct American subsidy for such activity. And, thus, it would mark a dangerous new phase of U.S. acceptance of Russian neo-imperialism.

Russian Pressure on Georgia

Some might say that President Shevardnadze supports this policy. But that overlooks what has happened to Georgia since its independence: the Russian military supported the separatist rebellion that the U.N. now seeks to monitor; the Russians pressured Georgia to allow Russian military forces to stay permanently, and to join the Commonwealth of Independent States. Only after the separatists scored major victories -- and nearly killed President Shevardnadze -- was he forced to accept Russian conditions, although he rightly pointed out his plight was due to Russian "reactionaries and militarists."

To say that President Shevardnadze supports any option now overlooks how little freedom of action he really has. Shevardnadze is in a straightjacket. Last September -- when it could have made a difference -- the United States was silent. Last October, Strobe Talbott denied Russian activities were designed to undermine Georgian sovereignty, and said Russia was not "conducting a mischievous policy towards Georgia." Maybe Ambassador Talbott got it right -- the policy wasn't mischievous, it was malicious. Squeeze Georgia economically, support a separatist rebellion, and when Georgia's extinction is at hand, force the acceptance of Russian troops and welcome Georgia to the CIS. In the words of General Bill Odom, "Thus, the Russian military has trapped the man they blame for destroying the Soviet position in central Europe."

Under these circumstances, to say the Russians were invited into Georgia brings back memories of Russian "invitations" into Hungary in 1956, into Czechoslovakia in 1968, or into Afghanistan in 1979. Georgia is a test case of Russian pressure on the former republics -- and it worked. They got bases, they got a new CIS member, and now they are going to get American taxpayers to finance their troops.

No Russian Troops in Peacekeeping Force

There is no reason that Russian troops need to be a part of any U.N. peacekeeping force. There is no reason American taxpayers should support such a force. And there is no reason to continue this Administration's peacekeeping deficit spending -- approving operation after operation with no idea how to pay for them.

The Clinton Administration claims they want bipartisan support for their foreign policy -- but this decision makes a mockery of their repeated promises to consult with Congress before supporting new U.N. peacekeeping operations. I didn't receive a phone call until three hours after President Clinton's

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press conference -- and that was just to let me know what the President announced.

The President may be able to get congressional support for this operation -- but only if it is paid for up front, if there are no Russian troops in the U.N. contingent, and if there is some strategic focus on the importance of Georgia in the region.

Use Aid to Cover U.S. Share of Costs

First, there is plenty of money to pay for this operation. Congress appropriated \$2.5 billion for the former Soviet Union -- much of it is unspent, or planned to flow to overpriced U.S. consultants. These funds could easily be used to cover the reported \$30-60 million U.S. share of the operation.

Second, Russian troops cannot be more than a token presence in the force. It would be political folly to sanction the former colonial occupiers to reoccupy this time, however, with blue helmets. And it would be fiscal folly to use American taxpayers money to pay for the revival of Russian imperialism. According to the State Department last week, the Russians did not want to participate in a U.N. Force. We should hold the Russians to that position this week.

Finally, the Administration needs to use more creativity in our assistance to the entire Transcaucasus region. Georgia can be the key to unlocking the wealth of central Asia without dependence on Russia. Georgia is also the key to lifting the immoral and illegal blockade of Armenia. Yet, the Administration is only contemplating humanitarian aid for Georgia. While important, it is not enough and reflects the short-term thinking of the Administration.

Establish Transcaucasus Enterprise Fund

In looking toward the longer term effects of U.S. policy toward Georgia, the Administration should move immediately to establish a Transcaucasus Enterprise Fund, along the lines of funds already established for Eastern Europe and the rest of the former Soviet Union. The Administration plans to spend more than a billion dollars through these funds to support investment and the development of free enterprise. Armenia and Georgia could benefit from such a fund in the very near future. And Azerbaijan could even someday benefit, if it ever lifts the blockade on Armenia, decides to make peace, and takes genuine steps to democracy and free market reform.

I met with President Shevardnadze again earlier today (Tuesday). I doubt if he will complain if the Russian role in any U.N. operation is restricted. President Shevardnadze expressed strong support for the concept of a Transcaucasus Enterprise Fund. He believes efforts to aid the development of free enterprise in the Transcaucasus region are vital to its future. I hope this time, the Administration will stand with President Shevardnadze.

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No matter how hard some of my colleagues on the other side of the aisle try to paint Whitewater as a Republican conspiracy, the bottom line is that Republicans are not responsible for negative editorials and press coverage in the Washington Post, The New York Times, and countless other newspapers. Nor do Republicans control Newsweek magazine, which this week ran a cover story entitled "Whitewater Torture." Much of the Whitewater torture is self-inflicted, the result of missteps, misstatements, some honest mistakes, and yes, some outright deceptions.

So let's stop the finger-pointing. And let's get on with the hearings. As The New York Times editorialized today, and I quote: "...Congress has a clear right to ask questions about government regulation of the savings and loan mess in Arkansas and, even more urgently, about whether the recently disclosed White House meetings with bank regulators represent an attempt to obstruct justice."

No doubt about it, it's critical that Whitewater hearings be bipartisan, carefully structured, and conducted in a way sensitive to the concerns of the independent counsel.

This is not an impossible task...even for Congress.

I don't want to pre-judge what these hearings may or may not disclose, but it's becoming increasingly clear that we need to get to the bottom of Whitewater so we can move ahead on the vital issues facing our country.

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Remarks delivered on the Senate floor at approximately 10:20 a.m.