

Bob Dole



NEWS

U.S. SENATOR FOR KANSAS

FROM:

SENATE REPUBLICAN LEADER

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HAITI POLICY

INVASION WOULD BE TRAGIC MISTAKE; ADMINISTRATION SHOULD SEEK PRIOR CONGRESSIONAL AUTHORIZATION FOR MILITARY ACTION; DOLE CALLS FOR BIPARTISAN FACT-FINDING COMMISSION

Press reports indicate the administration is considering deployment of U.S. military forces to Haiti -- either as trainers or as an invasion force. The apparent purpose is to put exiled President Aristide back in power. Before we act hastily, let's look at the facts.

Haiti poses no strategic threat to the United States. There has been no massive exodus of migrants from Haiti. Yes, the thugs and murderers running the country have committed horrible human rights violations -- but they have not threatened Americans in Haiti. But if human rights violations were enough reason for U.S. intervention, we'd be invading most countries in the world -- Rwanda, Sudan, China, Syria and many more.

Law Urges President Seek Congressional OK For Military Action

Last October 21, the Senate passed an amendment I drafted by a vote of 98-2. That amendment is now Section 8147 of Public Law 103-139. The amendment calls on the administration to seek the authorization of Congress before deploying military force to Haiti. While it is a Sense of Congress provision, it expresses the views of the overwhelming majority of Members. If President Clinton wants to use force in Haiti, he should make his case before Congress and before the American people. That's what President Bush did before Operation Desert Storm. Haiti should be no different.

We tried invading Haiti once this century -- after a sustained period of political violence in 1915. After 19 years of Marine occupation, and 34 years of controlling Haiti's finances, the U.S. left. After all the effort, the end result was the Duvalier regime, and he started out by getting elected too.

I agree with former President Bush: "The time has come for a significant shift in U.S. policy toward Haiti." President Bush, who was criticized for spending too much time on foreign policy, supported the return of President Aristide, but now argues that we can and should support democracy in Haiti, without supporting the return of Aristide to power.

Problems Won't Be Solved By Military Intervention

Haiti's problems will not be solved by outside military intervention. One election in 1990 did not make Haiti a democracy -- there was no rule of law, no functioning court system, or accountability of rulers to the ruled. President Aristide's actions in power and in exile raise serious doubts about the wisdom of risking U.S. lives to install him in power. And any invasion force would have to stay in Haiti to protect Aristide from his opponents. Any intervention would be costly, long-term, and very unlikely to result in stable democracy.

Under the administration's latest policy shift, any effort to forge political compromise among Haitians has been abandoned, leading President Clinton's former Special Representative to Haiti to observe that the U.S. has taken on full responsibility for Haiti's future. Ambassador Pezzullo points out: "This is no favor to President Aristide, the Haitian people or the Americans who will be sacrificed in the attempt."

Tightening Sanctions Will Increase Suffering

The latest policy not only rejects any pressure on Aristide to compromise, it will further impoverish the poorest country in the Hemisphere. Tightening sanctions, when Haiti has already had 65% of its economy shut down, will increase suffering among the

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poor while the military regime prospers -- especially when the U.S. Embassy buys its fuel from their black marketeers. This seems to be the administration's version of destroying a country in order to save it.

Don't Ignore Will of Congress

Turning Haiti into a U.S. colony is not wise policy. Sending American troops on ill-defined training missions in Haiti is not wise policy. Tightening sanctions is not wise policy and invading Haiti to put Aristide back in power would be a tragic mistake. I urge the administration not to ignore the clear will of Congress and to seek prior congressional authorization for U.S. military action in Haiti.

Dole Proposes Bipartisan Fact-Finding Commission

I also think it's time for a fresh look at the situation in Haiti -- what the democratically elected parliamentarians think, why Prime Minister Malval resigned in frustration, whether a peaceful solution is possible.

An independent fact finding commission should be created to review circumstances in Haiti -- it should be bipartisan, and appointed by the President and congressional leadership. When the most basic facts are in dispute -- as made clear by Ambassador Pezzullo's article today -- such a commission should provide important answers before U.S. lives are risked. Allowing such a commission to examine the best course to national reconciliation in Haiti before any additional action is a modest step. I hope to work with the President and his advisers in forming such a commission.

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* Remarks delivered on the Senate floor, approximately 3:00 PM.