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NEWS

U.S. SENATOR FOR KANSAS

FROM:

SENATE REPUBLICAN LEADER

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LIFT BOSNIA ARMS EMBARGO

BIPARTISAN DOLE/LIEBERMAN AMENDMENT REINTRODUCED TO REQUIRE TERMINATION OF ARMS EMBARGO AGAINST BOSNIA

I am pleased to be joined once again by the distinguished Senator from Connecticut, Senator Lieberman, in introducing this amendment to lift the U.S. arms embargo on Bosnia-Herzegovina. We are pleased to have a number of cosponsors again this time. An almost identical amendment -- the McCloskey, Gilman, Bonior, Hoyer amendment -- was adopted by the House -- to the House Defense Authorization Bill -- about two weeks ago.

No doubt, we will hear once again -- as members of the House heard -- that now is not the time to lift the arms embargo. We've heard this for twenty-six months now -- usually with the same excuses: allies with troops on the ground oppose lifting the embargo; the Russians oppose lifting the embargo; it's too late; it will hurt the negotiations.

U.S. Submits to Failed Policies

For more than two years now the United States has gone along with failed policies in the name of consensus. For more than two years now we have forsaken principle and ignored international law in the naive hope that this war will end by the good graces of the very perpetrators of this aggression.

It is true that once again we may be on the brink of the signing of another settlement. Once again, we are pressuring the victims -- the Bosnians -- to accept ethnic partition. And, once again, the administration is using this as an excuse to do nothing.

Now don't get me wrong. I would like to see a peaceful settlement; I would like to see an end to this brutal war -- I have seen its consequences in person. Just three weeks ago, I was in Sarajevo. I saw victims of the Serbian assault on Gorazde and victims of sniper attacks in Sarajevo hospital.

Issue at Stake is Just Peace

I believe that every one in this body would like to see an end to this war. But, that is not the issue. The issue is how to get to a just peace -- not just any peace -- not surrender.

But, for the moment, let us put aside issues of justice, morality, principle, or Bosnia's legal rights. There is one big question that no one in the administration can answer, or anyone else that advocates denying the Bosnians their right to self-defense, and that is: who or what is going to make the Bosnian Serbs withdraw from 70% of Bosnia to 49% as proposed by the so-called contact group?

Sure, we can probably pressure the Bosnians to sign this agreement like they signed the Vance/Owen plan last year. But, we get back to the same issue: how to get the Serbs to withdraw?

The U.S. won't use force to make the Serbs withdraw; the U.N. won't, and NATO won't. In fact, NATO's abysmal track record in enforcing the its ultimatums of Sarajevo, Gorazde and the other safe areas, is actually an incentive to the Serbs to stay put. After all, if the international community is unwilling to act when Serbian tanks violate the Sarajevo exclusion zone, if NATO is unwilling to retaliate when its plane is shot down by Bosnian Serb forces, why should the Serbs believe that there will be the will to use force to make them pull back to the 49% the contact group has so generously allotted them?

Negotiate From Position of Strength

Let us look more closely at some of the other arguments raised against this amendment. First, the impact on current negotiations. History has shown us that a stable peace can be achieved when there is balance on the battlefield. Our own history of negotiations with the Soviets taught us that

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negotiating from a position of strength produced the best results. The only potential outcome that is furthered by the continued arms embargo on the Bosnians is surrender.

NATO Influence Already Marginalized

As for those who say that this amendment will have a negative impact on NATO, it seems to me that NATO has already suffered significant damage. But not as a result of our efforts to lift the arms embargo. NATO's credibility has suffered because of decisions to subordinate NATO to the U.N. in Bosnia -- allowing U.N. officials to have operational control over NATO forces. NATO's influence has been marginalized because of a failure to define a clear and independent role in the post-cold war era. Moreover, NATO has been weakened by its willingness to allow Russia to dictate the terms of our security relations with former Warsaw pact countries, like Hungary, Poland, the Czech Republic and Slovakia.

Embargo Violates Inherent Right to Self-Defense

I would like to address once again the argument made by administration officials that unilaterally declaring this illegal arms embargo null and void will lead to the demise of legal U.N. embargoes against the perpetrators of aggression. Bosnia is the victim of aggression, while Iraq and Serbia are the aggressors. The arms embargo against Bosnia violates its inherent right to self-defense -- a right which is recognized in, but not limited to Article 51 of the U.N. Charter.

Whether or not this administration or other members of the U.N. Security Council choose to see, right and wrong still exist in this world; legal and illegal actions still exist under international law. This obfuscation and moral equivalence may work in the short term, but won't work in the long term. History will judge our actions here. History will judge whether or not the United States exercised leadership in support of a just peace in Bosnia or not.

UNPROFOR Has Not Protected Bosnia

Some opponents of my amendment argue that lifting the arms embargo will endanger UNPROFOR personnel. In my view, that puts the cart before the horse. The U.N. Protection Forces have not protected Bosnia. As a recent Los Angeles Times article points out, UNPROFOR has become "an empire that is more absorbed with keeping itself in business than restoring peace so it can disband and go home." UNPROFOR acts like a colonial occupying power. It has become an excuse for not lifting the arms embargo. It's time to quit worrying about UNPROFOR's sensibilities and to start worrying about Bosnia's right to self-defense.

Bosnians Not Asking for U.S. Troops

Finally, I would like to turn to the argument that lifting the arms embargo will "intensify the level of violence" and the administration's approach is to limit the intensity of violence. Having recently returned from the World War II celebrations in Europe, I would just say that had we used as our sole standard the level of bombing and established as our sole objective, limiting the "intensity of violence", we may never have invaded at Normandy. We were not responding to the "intensity" of violence in France, but to France's occupation by a fascist aggressor.

How quickly our European allies forget -- how ready they are to deny even minimal assistance to a young country in a similar situation. But, the Bosnians are not asking us to invade. They don't want our troops. They only want the means to effectively defend themselves and their country.

Yes, the shelling has subsided. However, the absence of shelling does not make a just peace. What about the 2 1/2 million Bosnian refugees who want to return to their homes?

Don't Deny Bosnians Chance to Determine Own Future

The bottom line is that the Bosnians have the right to defend themselves -- even at this late date, even if the odds are against them. Who are we to determine that they cannot be allowed to defend themselves? Who are we to say that they can only keep half of their country?

As I mentioned before, I was in Sarajevo. I saw the incredible state of destruction. I saw how people have suffered and are suffering. Who are we to deny these people a chance to determine their own future? We don't have to live with the consequences of not lifting the arms embargo -- the Bosnians do. We only have to live with our consciences.

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