

*Bob Dole*



**NEWS**

**U. S. SENATOR FOR KANSAS**

**FROM:**

**SENATE REPUBLICAN LEADER**

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## HAITI FACT-FINDING COMMISSION

### DOLE AMENDMENT PROPOSES BIPARTISAN CONGRESSIONAL FACT-FINDING COMMISSION: ASSESS HAITI CONDITIONS & REPORT TO CONGRESS IN 45 DAYS

I join with the international community in condemning Haiti's expulsion of United Nations human rights observers -- it is a cowardly and deplorable act. But I also join with an unlikely ally, the editorial page of the New York Times, in urging the administration not to use this act as a pretext for invasion. The editorial is right to conclude, "but except for refugees, what is going on in Haiti affects only Haiti." And I join with the USA Today editorial in seeing that we tried invading Haiti before, and we failed in our goals.

#### Don't Shoot First & Ask Questions Later

There are many views in this body about what course the U.S. should take in Haiti. Some support the use of American military power to restore President Aristide to power. Some oppose risking American lives for that purpose. But all of us should want the facts before passing judgment on the issue. The last thing we should do is shoot first and ask questions later -- questions that could lead to a peaceful resolution.

For more than 2 months, I have called for a bipartisan fact finding commission to review the situation in Haiti. I would expect supporters of the military option to favor my proposal. The worst outcome for the U.S. would be to commit U.S. power, prestige, and lives without understanding the nature of local conditions. The unfortunate example of Somalia stands as a stark reminder of this mistake. We all remember how dozens of Americans lost their lives trying to arrest a Somali warlord who, just days later, was given first class transportation by the U.S. military. I have every confidence in America's men and women in uniform but in Haiti, it is not hard to foresee a similar outcome: U.S. military power re-installs Aristide as president and, within days, American soldiers are deployed to restrain excesses of pro-Aristide forces.

The time to prevent such disasters is before they begin. The time to examine the facts is now, before troops are deployed. President Aristide opposes an invasion. Prime Minister Malval opposes an invasion. Haitian parliamentarians oppose an invasion. Under these circumstances, it is hard to find anyone supporting an invasion.

#### Appropriate Congressional Role

But it appears the administration is dead set on an invasion course. Political options have been rejected and are no longer explored. In this situation, Congress has an appropriate role. A few weeks ago, the Senate rejected an amendment which would have required congressional approval before an invasion of Haiti. Later, we approved an amendment expressing our view that such approval should be sought. Today, I am offering an amendment which establishes a congressional commission of limited duration with bipartisan membership. The commission would include the Majority and Minority Leaders, and Chairmen and ranking members of the four key committees in the House and Senate: Foreign Relations, Armed Services, Intelligence and Appropriations.

I do not see how anyone could oppose this amendment. It does not tie anyone's hands. It simply establishes a joint Senate-House commission to assess current conditions in Haiti and report back in 45 days.

(more)

### Questions for Commission

Some might say they have enough facts, and that a commission will just lead to more delay. In my view, there can not be too much information before a decision to deploy American troops is made. And there are many questions this commission could examine:

What, if anything, is the exact nature of any threats to Americans in Haiti?

Why has the flow of Haitians leaving by boat increased so dramatically in the past month?

Why have efforts to achieve a political solution failed over the last two years?

What role could democratically elected Haitian parliamentarians play in any potential solution?

Why did the parliamentarians effort earlier this year fail - an effort supported and accepted by the U.S. and the United Nations?

Why did Prime Minister Malval resign in disgust last year?

What is the real effect of sanctions on the poorest of Haitians?

What is the human rights record of the Aristide and Cedras governments?

Is it feasible to establish a safe haven on Haitian soil, a proposal endorsed by the House of Representatives?

The commission established by my amendment would not review such questions with a stacked deck. It would not rely on the spin control of high priced lawyers and public relations firms. It would provide an objective view of the situation by the Congress and for the Congress.

### Haitian Support for Bipartisan Commission

Earlier this month, I received a letter signed by a majority of the Haitian Chamber of Deputies -- some 48 Haitians. In the letter, the Deputies request that a bipartisan commission be designated to assess the situation in Haiti firsthand. A week later, one of the signatories of that letter, Duly Brutus, wrote a Washington Post article supporting a congressional commission. This member of parliament was democratically chosen in the same election which Aristide won in 1991, and he is every bit as legitimate as President Aristide.

I do not know if Bill Gray has met Duly Brutus. I do not know how many Haitians he has met with beyond Aristide's circle. I do not know if he has been to Haiti recently. But I do know that U.S. policy should be based on all the available facts.

I don't think 45 days and an independent review by Congress is too much to ask. In 1984, with bitter partisan debate over U.S. policy toward Central America, President Reagan listened to Congress and appointed a bipartisan panel -- the Kissinger Commission. I remain ready to work with the President in creating such a commission. I am confident the executive branch will work cooperatively with this congressional commission if my amendment is adopted.

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\* Remarks delivered on the Senate floor, approximately 3:10 PM.