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NEWS

U. S. SENATOR FOR KANSAS

FROM:

SENATE REPUBLICAN LEADER



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CUBA POLICY

CLINTON ADMINISTRATION SUDDENLY OVERTURNS CUBAN REFUGEE POLICY; DOLE URGES PRESIDENT TO PUT HEAT ON CASTRO, FOCUS ON DEMOCRATIC CHANGE

A casual observer could be forgiven for being confused over American immigration policy toward Cuba. Yesterday afternoon, Attorney General Reno said administration policy was responding "in an orderly way and without disruption" to the recent increase in Cuban immigration. The Attorney General went on, "We do not believe that this current influx has been a burden yet on the community." That was yesterday afternoon: no crisis, no panic, no emergency. Yet a few short hours later last night, the administration decided to prevent Cuban refugees from reaching the U.S. -- overturning three decades of American policy. I don't think the number of Cubans changed dramatically yesterday afternoon.

Same Refugee & Foreign Policy for Cuba & Haiti

If we are going to have the same refugee policy for Cuba as we do for Haiti, we should have the same foreign policy. U.S. policy toward Haiti has been based on threats and saber rattling, but there has been silence on Cuba. Fidel Castro has done more to threaten American interests than any Haitian leader ever could. President Clinton should call on Fidel Castro to step down immediately. President Clinton should tell U.N. Ambassador Madeline Albright to seek international sanctions and isolate Cuba through the United Nations. And President Clinton should spend as much effort drawing lines in the sand about democratic change in Cuba as he has spent in threatening Haiti. We don't need to invade Haiti, and we don't need to invade Cuba. But we should care as much about democratic change in Cuba as we do about democratic change in Haiti. And, if the U.S. is going to interdict refugees leaving Cuba, maybe we should consider interdicting oil and fuel going into Cuba.

We all remember the Mariel disaster under President Jimmy Carter in 1980. We cannot and must not allow Fidel Castro to do the same under President Clinton. President Clinton should make it clear to Fidel Castro that sending the occupants of Cuban prisons, insane asylums and hospitals to Florida will be considered an act of aggression against the U.S. -- and the U.S. will respond appropriately.

Castro's Dictatorship: Root Cause of Tragedy

Finally, we should all remember the refugee flow from Cuba is the symptom -- not the cause -- of an underlying problem. It is Fidel Castro's brutal dictatorship that is the root cause of Cuba's tragedy. The economy is a dismal failure and the political prisons are filled with thousands of inmates. Communism has failed in Cuba just as decisively as it failed in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. It is only a matter of time before Cuba is forever freed from Fidel Castro's tyranny. Castro should not be allowed to use emigration to South Florida as a way to release pressure on his corrupt and illegitimate regime.

I hope when the President speaks to the American people today, he will address the real problems in Cuba -- Castro's repressive regime. And I hope the President will announce a long-term plan to address democratic change in Cuba, not just new measures to detain freedom-seeking Cubans.

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*Remarks delivered on the Senate floor, approximately 12:45 PM.