

Bob Dole



NEWS

U. S. SENATOR FOR KANSAS

FROM:

SENATE REPUBLICAN LEADER

****EMBARGOED FOR RELEASE****
11:00 AM SUNDAY
SEPTEMBER 4, 1994

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FOREIGN & DEFENSE POLICY

SENATE REPUBLICAN LEADER BOB DOLE

Remarks Prepared for Delivery

National Guard Association of the U.S.

Hynes Convention Center

Boston, Massachusetts

Sunday, September 4, 1994

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Thank you General Reuger. It's a real honor to join you today. The National Guard and this Association stands as one of the premier organizations dedicated to the defense of our freedom.

You know, as Americans go about our everyday lives, raising a family and earning a living, it can be easy to forget what it means to be free -- but it is all around us. A nation which charts its own destiny. Communities of individuals who make their own decisions on what to think, how to worship, where to live and where to work. But it is freedom that makes America different. Freedom makes America great. There is no more important work than protecting and defending our freedom. In my view, there is no higher calling than the citizen soldier -- men and women dedicated to their families, their communities, and to their country. I salute the men and women of the National Guard. To me, you represent the best of what America is all about.

Earlier this summer, I had the privilege of returning to Italy, where I fought with the 10th Mountain Division. And I was honored to be present for the ceremonies commemorating the 50th anniversary of D-Day. While I stood at Utah Beach, Omaha Beach and the American cemetery at Colleville, I could not help but reflect on the fact that without American leadership during those critical years of World War II, there would have been no D-Day. There would have been no V-E Day. The fact is, it was American leadership that defeated Hitler, and Japan, and secured the peace for the world.

America Won the Cold War

Unfortunately, peace has been short lived. In 1945, America stood over the world like a colossus. We were the world's super power. But just five years later, America was nearly defeated by tiny North Korea. A tough lesson learned all over again. Leadership requires a commitment to strength. Weakness invites war. These are simple truths -- but too easily forgotten.

You can't help but marvel at the changes in the world today. The fall of the Berlin Wall, the collapse of the Soviet empire, the break-up of the Warsaw Pact -- it is amazing. But let me take a moment to point something out. America won the Cold War and defeated communism. America won the Cold War and defeated communism. A lot of people have been trying to rewrite history. They want to sell the notion that the Soviet Union and communism just dried up and blew away on its own. But the fact is, American strength, American perseverance, American commitment to freedom, and American leadership won the Cold War and defeated communism. America should be proud of that achievement. Millions of people breathe free because of your vigilance and sacrifice. It was the right thing to do and I just want to say, thank you.

American Leadership Lacking

But now, we have entered a new era. The world is much less predictable, and potentially far more dangerous. American leadership is critical. And, unfortunately, American leadership has been lacking.

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In January 1993, President Clinton was sworn into office with American credibility at an all-time high. The Soviet Union was defeated. Germany was re-united peacefully. Saddam Hussein's land grab in the Persian Gulf was reversed. Operation Desert Storm stood as a lesson to any would be tyrants. American leadership had been demonstrated to the world, and American resolve was not doubted.

Less than two years later, the situation has dramatically changed. Russia is in turmoil. North Korea's nuclear ambitions are unchecked. The Caribbean is on its way to being bill Clinton's Central America. When a U.S. humanitarian mission became a United Nations nation-building exercise, American lives were lost needlessly in Somalia. In the next few weeks, American lives may soon be lost needlessly in Haiti.

Flip-Flop, Indecision, Appeasement

In a few short months, the foreign policy inheritance of twelve years of American leadership has been squandered. Reversals, not resolve, came to characterize American foreign policy. Flip-flop, indecision, and appeasement are now the watchwords of American foreign policy. American interests are challenged around the globe and American credibility is at an all-time low.

The Clinton administration has no real national security strategy -- instead individuals pursue their personal agendas, and domestic concerns drive foreign policy. Without leadership at the top, policy drifts along subject to change on a daily or even hourly basis.

That's why the U.S. is at odds with much of the religious world over a U.N. population conference that seeks to impose a narrow version of "population control" on the rest of the world. That's why the U.S. is on the verge of invading Haiti, a country that poses no threat to American interests, while hard-line communists in North Korea and Cuba receive concessions. That's why Russia is allowed to veto the expansion of NATO, the most successful alliance in history. That's why repeated threats to halt Serbian aggression are meaningless while America continues to enforce an illegal and immoral arms embargo on Bosnia. And that's why a 30-year old embargo on Vietnam was lifted without any quid pro quo.

In every corner of the world, the lack of American leadership has harmed American interests. Even when the administration reaches the right decision -- such as granting most favored nation status to China, or withdrawing from Somalia -- it does so in such a way that American credibility is further diminished. And as our credibility diminishes, so does our ability to protect our interests around the world.

Gutting, Not Cutting, Defense

Like you, I am extremely concerned by the massive cuts in our national defense. In my view, we are not cutting defense, we are gutting it. You know the story better than anyone so I won't repeat this sad litany. But I want to make the point that the administration is breaking faith with our national security and with our military. Not only will this so-called bottom-up review force not do the job, but the president's defense budget won't even pay for this inadequate force. The figures vary, but according to the GAO, this scaled down military plan is short about \$150 billion. And I don't see any sign from the administration that they intend to correct the problem -- except to cancel more programs and mortgage the future.

I know that many of you are concerned about the future. While last year's "off site" agreement helps to address some of those concerns, the threat of additional cuts only adds to the sense of turmoil and instability. There have been a lot of nice sounding words from the White House and the Pentagon lately -- talking about their commitment to keeping a strong force and making people the top priority. But it seems to me, that the administration is trying to take credit for fixing a problem that it created. The fact is, the President's budget plan -- passed over the unanimous objection of Republicans -- slashes \$127 billion from an already scaled down force. The president's plan called for little or no pay raises for our military. The Clinton plan caused the shortfall in readiness accounts. The Clinton plan forces over 600,000 people out of our military and makes the dramatic cuts in our National Guard. The fact is, it was Congress that restored the pay raise and increased the readiness accounts. But because the President's plan cuts defense so deep -- the Pentagon must cancel nearly every new program just to cover adequate pay and training for the troops. And for this, you are expected to be grateful.

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Mission of the National Guard

One thing is clear, as the defense budget continues to shrink, the National Guard's dual mission and cost effectiveness make it all the more important in this changing world. The demands on the National Guard will continue to increase even as the defense budget shrinks. The Army and Air National Guard are, and will continue to be, an integral part of the first line defense. You only have to look at the 15 Enhanced Brigades and the contingency force pool units to realize the importance of the Guard in ensuring victory in any future major regional contingency.

At the same time the guard will maintain its unique mission as the states' militia. Since 1636, when the first militia regiments were organized by the Massachusetts Bay colony, to today, the Guard has been there to answer the call of the states. Whether battling the midwest floods or the California earthquake, you are there.

For more than 350 years the National Guard has answered the call. Now its up to us to ensure that it remains prepared for another 350 years.

In order for the armed forces, whether active or reserve, to be prepared to face this post-cold war era, it must remain the best trained and best equipped force in the world. Most importantly however, it must continue to attract the high quality of men and women which now fill its ranks. The greatest asset our military has is its people. However, many Americans no longer believe that the military offers them the career opportunities it once did, and that a serious problem. Already each of the services are having trouble filling their enlistment quotas and the percentage of "Cat 4" enlistees is rising. There are many things that we can do to ensure that military service provides opportunities for the next generation of Americans -- our nation's future leaders. Today, however, I want to touch briefly on just two.

Dole GI Bill

In the coming weeks I will introduce legislation which will modify GI Bill benefits to reflect the growing cost of obtaining a college education. This new GI bill will increase the amount of GI Bill benefits and expand the time that service members can make contributions toward educational benefits, make the participant's contribution and monthly benefit tax exempt, allow benefits to be used to pay existing educational loans. And I plan to make these benefits available to all members of the Guard and Reserve. It has been over fifty years since the first Servicemen's Readjustment Act was signed into law. Now it's time to bring the GI Bill into the nineties. In my view, education assistance is the least we can do for the men and women who put their lives on the line to defend our way of life.

Secondly, federal law currently makes a distinction between Title 10 and Title 32 active duty in the determination of civil service computation dates, creating an inequity which needs to be addressed. I understand that the Association has adopted a resolution urging Congress to correct this inequity. In my view this is simply a matter of fairness and is one which will be addressed in the next Congress.

Today we are asking our fighting men and women to take on more missions, deploy to more hostile environments, and face greater danger with fewer numbers and less support. If we do not want to return to the hollow force of the 1970s and if we are to maintain the world's best military, then we have to ensure that we really take care of our people.

After World War II, the United States emerged as a superpower. Today we stand as the only superpower. It is our leadership which has brought us this far. Let us ensure that we do not forget the lessons of history and let us maintain a strong and prepared America.

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