

Bob Dole



**NEWS
FROM:**

**U.S. SENATOR FOR KANSAS
SENATE REPUBLICAN LEADER**

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BOSNIA & IRANIAN ARMS

DOLE ASKS COMMITTEE CHAIRMEN TO EXAMINE ROLE OF PRESIDENT & ADMINISTRATION OFFICIALS; DUPLICITOUS POLICY SERIOUSLY DAMAGED U.S. CREDIBILITY WITH ALLIES

Since the report surfaced in the Los Angeles Times that President Clinton decided to allow Iran to provide arms to the Bosnians, there has been little, if any, response from the other side of the aisle.

Had there been a Republican in the White House, no doubt, some of my colleagues on the other side of the aisle would have been all over the President. But, that is not the real issue. This is not about the conduct of partisan politics, but the conduct of our foreign policy. This is about American leadership, American credibility and congressional oversight. That is why I met today with the Chairmen of the Foreign Relations, Intelligence, and Armed Services and Judiciary Committees to discuss this serious foreign policy matter.

Administration Opposed Congressional Efforts to Lift U.N. Embargo
For nearly three years, this administration opposed congressional efforts to lift the unjust and illegal arms embargo on Bosnia and Herzegovina. We were told, and the American people were told, that the United States was bound by the U.N. embargo on the former Yugoslavia. We were told that if America "violated" this embargo, we would lose support from our allies for other embargoes, such as the one against Iraq. Finally, we were told that lifting the embargo and allowing the Bosnians to have arms while U.N. forces were deployed in Bosnia, would endanger the troops of our allies.

Congress Did Not Know President Gave Green Light for Iran Arms

Some people are saying, well, you knew that Iran was providing arms to the Bosnians. I'd like to respond to that. While we read and heard reports that Iran was smuggling arms to the Bosnians, we did not know the President and his advisers made a conscious decision to give a green light for Iran to provide arms. Indeed, those of us who advocated lifting the arms embargo -- Republicans and Democrats -- argued that if America did not provide Bosnia with assistance, Iran would be Bosnia's only option.

In my view, the roles of the President and administration officials in this matter need to be examined -- even if we do not receive cooperation from the White House and the Intelligence Oversight Board, which has been the case to date. In the meeting I held with the four committee chairmen today, we decided on the approach we would take. The Intelligence Committee will investigate the matter of whether any administration officials were engaged in covert action. The Foreign Relations Committee will review administration policy, as stated and as executed, as well as the ramifications of these revelations.

Let me tell you why I believe such an examination is important. In short, this duplicitous policy has seriously damaged our credibility with our allies. It has also produced one of the most serious threats to our military forces in Bosnia and, according to the administration, the main obstacle to the arm and train program for the Bosnians -- I am talking about the presence of Iranian military forces and intelligence officials in Bosnia.

Lifting Arms Embargo Was Right Thing To Do

Had we lifted the arms embargo and provided weapons, the Bosnians could have defended themselves. Chances are there would have been a peace agreement sooner and on better terms for the Bosnians. Most likely, we also would not have 20,000 American soldiers in Bosnia at this moment. Finally, had we lifted the arms embargo on Bosnia, the United States would have done the right thing, for the right reason, openly and honestly.

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* Remarks delivered on Senate floor, approximately 1:00 p.m.