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NEWS

U.S. SENATOR FOR KANSAS

FROM:

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ASIA POLICY

SECRETARY CHRISTOPHER'S RHETORIC NO SUBSTITUTE FOR PRESIDENTIAL LEADERSHIP ON CHINA; DOLE CITES LATEST DMZ INCIDENT AS FAILURE OF PRESIDENT CLINTON'S NORTH KOREA POLICY

Last week, I spoke about the importance of American power and purpose in the Pacific Rim, and called on President Clinton to articulate a coherent strategy toward East Asia. I am pleased that at least one Cabinet official has discovered the importance of China in American foreign policy. But as is usual with the Clinton Administration, rhetoric is not matched with results. I respect Secretary Christopher, but his speech is no substitute for Presidential leadership on China, and no excuse for the President's absence from the debate over Most Favored Nation trade status for China.

There was little new in today's speech -- the same ambiguity toward Taiwan, and the same silence on Chinese nuclear cooperation with the outlaw regime in Tehran. Some of the Administration's most fundamental policy flaws in Asia were not addressed. The Administration persists in its misguided courtship of North Korea and its mistaken policy of delaying effective missile defenses for America, American forces and American allies.

I said last week that President Clinton's approach to North Korea was dead wrong. Today, this failure was again demonstrated when North Korean soldiers entered the demilitarized zone. The incursion only ended when South Korean forces fired warning shots. It is clear that President Clinton's policy of coddling North Korea has only encouraged and invited further provocative acts. It is clear that North Korea continues to undermine the armistice agreement because Pyongyang believes intimidation will lead to more concessions from the Clinton Administration.

A White House official was quoted as describing the event a "not a major incident." Deadly fire in the DMZ should not be accepted as routine. Downplaying North Korean threats -- to American forces and to South Korea -- has become a habit in this White House. Sad to say, President Clinton has not accepted the fact that his approach to North Korea has failed. Instead of excusing North Korean acts of aggression, President Clinton should announce he will stop cutting separate deals with North Korea. And President Clinton should suspend bilateral talks with North Korea on proliferation and diplomatic normalization until North Korea resumes direct dialogue with South Korea as it promised to do five years ago.

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