



NEWS from

U.S. Senator Bob Dole

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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BOB DOWNEN

DOLE CHALLENGE: ACCEPT AMENDMENTS OR WITHDRAW TREATY

In a continuing dialogue with the Administration concerning the Panama Canal Treaties, Senator Bob Dole said today that the State Department should either be willing to accept the idea of Senate Amendments or else withdraw the Treaties now for renegotiation.

"The Senate will not settle for verbal assurances on our defense rights under the Treaty," Dole stated.

"We don't want pacifiers, we want protection. The Treaty is a contract. And the only way to clarify a contract is to make its language as clear and precise as possible."

Dole continued, "I have followed the established procedure for doing this, in introducing amendments and reservations to an ambiguous Treaty. However, if the State Department is unwilling to accept the idea of Congressional modification, maybe they should withdraw the Treaty now, renegotiate with the Panamanians, and then resubmit the document to Congress."

"It is especially troubling to me to think that if the State Department Cable revealing serious disagreements between the U.S. and Panama over the meaning of the treaties had not been revealed, the Senate might have proceeded to ratify an agreement seriously damaging to U.S. security and economic interests. We would have done so, ignorant of vital information hidden under a State Department security blanket."

Earlier, the State Department had said it was maintaining a continuing dialogue with Panama to seek clarification of differing interpretations of Treaty provisions. While the Department is looking for reassurances on U.S. rights to defend the Canal and to gain priority passage through the Canal, it had indicated that Panamanian statements to this effect would probably not be forthcoming until after the October 23 plebiscite in Panama.

"I have no doubt that words of reassurance will flow fast and free after the Panamanian vote is over," Dole said. "But that will not explain away the understandings that top Panamanian officials are attaching to the Treaties today. If they say one thing now, and another next month, how can we place confidence in their verbal assurances?"

"The proper course now is Congressional modification. If the Administration cannot accept this, then they should take the initiative and go back to the talks now."