



NEWS from U.S. Senator Bob Dole

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STATEMENT BY SENATOR BOB DOLE ON CAMBODIAN SITUATION

WASHINGTON -- The following is Senator Bob Dole's opening statement:

"Ladies and gentlemen, I am pleased to be able to host this conference this morning between members of the media and Mr. Chhang Song, former Minister of Information for Cambodia. The events of recent days have cast the small nation of Cambodia into the forefront of international attention once again. Once again, it is a Communist force which has subjugated the country and taken control of the government. Once again, it is the innocent people of Cambodia who are forced to endure the hardships of war and the yoke of Communist tyranny.

"I think all of us have mixed reactions to this state of affairs. Certainly, from the standpoint of human rights, we are relieved that the Pol Pot reign of terror is ended. At the same time, the United States cannot condone the blatant and illegal invasion of tiny Cambodia by the forces of her neighbor, Vietnam," said Dole.

"There is little that the United States alone can do, or should do, to affect the political situation as it now stands in Cambodia. However, we can encourage international support for the proper sovereignty of Cambodia. And we can initiate and seek assistance in providing humanitarian relief to the Cambodian people.

MR. CHHANG SONG'S BACKGROUND

"I think all of us are open to suggestions as to appropriate methods through which the United States and the international community might respond to present circumstances in Cambodia, for the purpose of enhancing the human rights and general welfare of the innocent Cambodian people. Mr. Chhang Song, who is with us here today, has his own views on the manner in which such steps might be taken. As a native Cambodian, and one whose official experience gives him a unique perspective on the subject, Mr. Chhang deserves a chance to be heard on this matter. By way of background, Chhang Song was the cabinet-level Minister of Information for Cambodia during the Presidency of Lon Nol. That government was, of course, a friend and ally of the United States. It was forced from power by Communist Cambodian forces in April, 1975, at the same time that N. Vietnam successfully overran S. Vietnam.

"Prior to his position as Information Minister, Mr. Chhang served as Press Secretary to the Cambodian delegation to the United Nations, and as War Cabinet Member of the Lon Nol government. He was educated at Louisiana State University, and taught classes for a time at Southern Illinois University. In just a moment, I will ask Mr. Chhang to proceed with his comments on the current situation, his suggestions as to appropriate international actions, and his answers to your questions.

DOLE LETTER TO VANCE

"First, however, I want to direct your attention to a letter which I have sent to Secretary of State Cyrus Vance. Copies of the letter are available. In that letter, I have noted the Department's earlier dismissal of the Cambodian-Vietnamese conflict as a matter in which the United States had no "useful role to play". I suggest that, wherever basic human rights are in question and national sovereignty is at issue, the United States does have a role to play, whether by itself or in conjunction with the international community.

"In the present situation, as debate is scheduled to get underway in the Security Council at the United Nations, I suggest that the United States initiate the following: (1) the immediate dispatch of a United Nations fact-finding mission to Cambodia to evaluate the current political and social conditions of the country; and (2) establishment of a temporary United Nations trusteeship over the government, in place of the puppet regime set up by the Vietnamese invaders. This trusteeship could supervise certain administrative duties and exercise the vital humanitarian relief measures which are needed until a freely chosen government can be established in Phnom Penh.

"In the meantime, I believe that the United States should do all it can to facilitate the shipment of food and relief items to innocent Cambodian victims, and encourage the safe repatriation of Cambodians, who were forced to flee the country earlier.

"This is certainly not the only approach that the United States might consider at the present time. However, these are suggestions which I hope that the Secretary of State will take into consideration as he reviews appropriate measures for our participation in United Nations relief action. Certainly, a humanitarian concern for the innocent people of Cambodia overrides all other considerations at this time.

(MORE)

DOLE INITIATIVES

"Finally, I will just briefly review the record of my own concern about the situation in Cambodia. In November 1977, I sponsored Senate Resolution 323, condemning the severe human rights violations of the Pol Pot regime in Cambodia, and calling on President Carter to take whatever steps were available to rally world-wide sentiment against the brutality. That Resolution was cosponsored by 16 of my Senate colleagues.

"I followed that legislative initiative with my letter to Secretary Vance in January 1978, expressing concern about the growing warfare between Cambodia and Vietnam, and its harsh repercussions on the welfare of the Cambodian people.

"At the time of National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski's trip to Peking in May of last year, I urged the Administration, on the floor of the Senate, to discuss the Cambodian human rights violations with Chinese leaders, and to urge them to use their influence on Cambodian leaders to help moderate social conditions.

"In June 1978, I joined a rally of Cambodian refugees on the steps of the United States Capitol, and added my voice to those condemning the holocaust underway in the tiny nation.

"On July 31, by a vote of 57 to 30, the Senate supported my amendment to direct U.S. Representatives to the International Monetary Fund to vote against financial or technical assistance to the Communist Cambodian regime.

"And, on August 3, the Senate approved my amendment to the State-Justice Appropriations bill, calling upon the Attorney General to grant special parole authority to allow an additional 15,000 Cambodian refugees to enter the United States during the next two years. That amendment was later approved by the House as well, and became a part of the Justice Department Appropriations bill, as enacted by the President.

"Because of my long interest and concern about the human rights and welfare of the Cambodian people, I feel it is essential that we speak up at this time, when a major political transition is underway in that nation. Given the extraordinary hardships which millions of Cambodians have already endured, and which they might be expected to suffer at the hands of the new Communist regime in the future, we cannot, in good conscience, remain silent."