

News from Senator

BOB DOLE



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DOLE INTRODUCES CARIBBEAN BASIN INITIATIVE

WASHINGTON -- Citing economic, cultural and national security benefits for both the U.S. and its Caribbean neighbors, Senator Robert Dole (R-Kan.) today introduced President Reagan's Caribbean Basin Initiative (CBI).

As Chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, Dole has jurisdiction over international issues, and in that role, Tuesday promised a major effort to win Congressional approval of the President's plan this year. The Kansas Senator introduced the CBI last year, but after winning House and Senate Finance Committee approval, the 97th Congress expired before the full Senate could act on the measure.

"This should be the year we demonstrate to our Caribbean friends the leadership that will show them the way out of their economic malaise and strengthen their democratic institutions," Dole said. "Although the beneficiary nations of the CBI are widely divergent, they share some common characteristics: most are suffering severe economic hardships; they are increasingly oriented to the United States--and together they form our southern border. Too long has this country failed adequately to comprehend our national interests in this integrated region, and to take full advantage of the mutual opportunities greater cooperation offers."

"In a region suffering a history of conflict, the 15 recently emergent nations of the Caribbean Basin offer a tempting target for Soviet trouble-making," Dole continued. "The announcement last year of a Soviet aid package to Granada, and recent reports of Cuban interference in Surinam, provide timely examples of real concerns for our borders, our sea lanes, and the Panama Canal," Dole concluded.

Dole noted that last year CBI countries imported about \$6.3 billion worth of goods from the United States, a figure which doubles what Uncle Sam imported from them. Direct U.S. investment in the Caribbean Basin has climbed to \$10 billion.

"The United States is bound by an increasing web of social ties with the Caribbean Basin countries," Dole noted. "Some estimate that, excluding Mexicans, over 250,000 illegal immigrants now enter the United States yearly from the countries of the Caribbean Sea and Central America. Their desperate desire to seek political or economic emancipation in this country is perhaps matched only in magnitude by the strain on the services of our national and state governments provide them once they are here."

"In fiscal year 1982 the United States targeted about \$475 million in developmental aid; the federal government and the state of Florida have spent over twice that on Cuban and Haitian refugees since the Mariel boatlift," Dole said.

According to Dole, the U.S. stake in Caribbean Basin countries will depend heavily on their own stability.

"As the nations of Central America struggle to end armed conflict among themselves and with communist guerillas, as the Caribbean nations attempt to restructure their economies, an historic opportunity presents itself to the United States to help place them on a firm, permanent path to growth and stability," Dole said.