

News from Senator

BOB DOLE



(R - Kansas) SH 141 Hart Building, Washington, D.C. 20510-1601

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
TUESDAY, MAY 19, 1987

CONTACT: WALT RIKER,
DALE TATE 202/224-3135

STATEMENT OF SENATOR BOB DOLE

TRAGEDY IN THE GULF

SUNDAY'S ATTACK ON THE USS STARK, IN WHICH 37 AMERICAN SAILORS WERE KILLED, IS ANOTHER TRAGIC REMINDER OF THE HIGH DANGER -- AND THE HIGH STAKES -- IN THE IRAN-IRAQ WAR.

MY FIRST THOUGHTS ARE THOSE OF PROFOUND SORROW AT THIS TERRIBLE LOSS OF LIFE, AND DEEP SYMPATHY FOR THE FAMILIES OF THE DEAD. THE VICTIMS WERE AMONG AMERICA'S FINEST. THEY DIED PERFORMING THEIR DUTY. THEIR SACRIFICE CAN NEVER BE FORGOTTEN.

WHAT HAPPENED?

OUR IMMEDIATE TASK AS A NATION IS TO FIND OUT WHAT HAPPENED. AND, ABOVE ALL, TO FIND OUT WHY THIS SHIP -- EQUIPPED WITH SOME OF OUR MOST MODERN AND EFFECTIVE DEFENSIVE WEAPONRY -- WAS NOT ABLE TO, OR JUST DID NOT, USE ANY OF IT TO DEFEND ITSELF.

CHARGES OF THE MOST SERIOUS KIND ARE BEING LEVIED. WE HAVE TO GET ALL THE FACTS OUT, AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. THE ONE THING, ABOVE ALL ELSE, THAT WE CANNOT AND WILL NOT TOLERATE IS ANY ATTEMPT TO COVER UP ANYTHING OR PROTECT ANYONE WHO MIGHT BE AT FAULT. BUT LET US GET THE TRUTH BEFORE WE RENDER FINAL JUDGMENTS.

IRAQI ROLE

AND, TOO, THERE ARE MANY QUESTIONS ABOUT IRAQ'S ACTIONS -- QUESTIONS WHICH DEMAND PROMPT AND CREDIBLE ANSWERS. IT IS ALREADY CLEAR THAT THIS ATTACK WAS TOTALLY UNPROVOKED. IT SHOULD NEVER HAVE HAPPENED. IT IS INEXCUSABLE. IRAQ MUST BE HELD ACCOUNTABLE, TO THAT DEGREE AT THE VERY LEAST.

IN ADDITION, WE MUST HAVE BINDING ASSURANCES FROM IRAQ -- AND I STRESS THAT WORD: BINDING -- THAT THIS WILL NEVER HAPPEN AGAIN. AND WE MUST MAKE CLEAR TO IRAQ THAT -- IF IT DOES -- THE COST TO IRAQ WILL BE VERY, VERY HIGH.

PERSIAN GULF CHALLENGE

FINALLY, WE NEED TO RETHINK EXACTLY WHAT IT IS WE ARE DOING IN THE PERSIAN GULF. WHAT ARE OUR GOALS? WHAT IS OUR STRATEGY? WHAT ARE THE RISKS? AND HOW MUCH COST ARE WE WILLING TO PAY?

ONE QUESTION THAT DESERVES A SPECIAL, RENEWED EXAMINATION IS THE AGREEMENT BEING WORKED OUT WITH KUWAIT TO PUT AMERICAN FLAGS ON SOME OF ITS TANKERS, TO DISCOURAGE IRANIAN ATTACK. THAT PLAN MAY STILL MAKE SENSE. BUT, AT THE LEAST, IN LIGHT OF SUNDAY'S TRAGEDY, WE NEED TO TAKE A NEW LOOK.

WE WON'T BE INTIMIDATED

BUT, AS WE PONDER AND PURSUE THESE MATTERS, LET US REAFFIRM ONE POINT VERY STRONGLY: AMERICA WILL MAINTAIN A MILITARY PRESENCE IN THESE INTERNATIONAL WATERS. WE HAVE VITAL AMERICAN INTERESTS THERE -- AND WE WILL DEFEND THEM. WE HAVE COMMITMENTS THERE -- AND WE WILL KEEP THEM.

WE WILL NOT BE FORCED OUT. WE WILL NOT BE SCARED OUT. AND WE WILL DO WHATEVER IS NECESSARY TO PROTECT OUR FORCES WHEN THEY ARE ATTACKED, AND TO STRIKE BACK AT OUR ADVERSARIES. ON THESE MATTERS, THE CONGRESS IS BEHIND THE PRESIDENT, 100%

#####