

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
MONDAY, JULY 31, 1989

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DOLE: NO SAFE HAVEN FOR THOSE WHO MURDER AMERICANS
CALLS FOR U.S. RESPONSE IF HIGGINS REPORTS ARE TRUE

WASHINGTON -- THE FOLLOWING ARE THE COMMENTS OF SENATE REPUBLICAN LEADER BOB DOLE, MADE ON THE FLOOR OF THE SENATE THIS MORNING, IN REACTION TO REPORTS THAT U.S. MARINE LT. COL. WILLIAM R. HIGGINS WAS HANGED BY PRO-IRANIAN SHIITE MOSLEM CAPTORS:

...THERE ARE REPORTS FROM LEBANON THIS MORNING THAT COLONEL RICHARD HIGGINS HAS BEEN MURDERED BY HIS CAPTORS, A RADICAL MUSLIM GROUP THAT KIDNAPPED HIM IN FEBRUARY 1988.

OUR FIRST THOUGHTS AND OUR PRAYERS THIS MORNING ARE OF COLONEL HIGGINS FAMILY, ESPECIALLY HIS WIFE ROBIN, WHO IS ALSO AN ACTIVE DUTY MEMBER OF THE U.S. MARINES. THEY HAVE SUFFERED SO MUCH, FOR SO LONG. AND NOW THEY FACE THIS TERRIBLE MOMENT OF ANGUISH.

IN RECENT MONTHS MY OFFICE, IN COORDINATION WITH THE OFFICE OF THE DISTINGUISHED MAJORITY LEADER, SENATOR MITCHELL, HAS BEEN IN TOUCH WITH ROBIN HIGGINS AND HER REPRESENTATIVES, QUIETLY TRYING TO FIND WAYS TO WIN COLONEL HIGGINS' RELEASE. WE HAD SOME REASON TO HOPE THAT WE MIGHT AT LEAST CONFIRM THAT COL. HIGGINS WAS ALIVE, AND OBTAIN SOME INFORMATION ON HIS CONDITION AND WHEREABOUTS IN THE COURSE OF THIS WEEK. AS I'VE INDICATED, EVENTS BEYOND OUR CONTROL INTERVEANED.

MR. PRESIDENT, AS FAR AS I AM CONCERNED, THERE CAN BE NO SAFE HAVEN FOR THOSE WHO MURDER INNOCENT AMERICANS. THERE CAN BE NO SAFE HAVEN FOR THOSE WHO RESPOND TO WHAT THEY SEE AS THE OFFENSE OF OTHERS BY KILLING AMERICANS SIMPLY BECAUSE THEY SEE US AS THE MOST ATTRACTIVE TARGET, OR THE TARGET THAT CAN WIN THEM THE MOST POLITICAL ATTENTION, OR MEDIA ATTENTION, OR LEVERAGE.

MR. PRESIDENT, IF WE CAN FIND OUT WHO DID THIS, AND LOCATE AND ISOLATE THEM, WE OUGHT TO MAKE THEM PAY. WE OUGHT TO MAKE SURE THEY ARE NEVER AGAIN IN A POSITION TO HARM ANOTHER AMERICAN.

I AM CERTAIN WE ALL HOPE AND PRAY THAT IT IS NOT AN ACCURATE REPORT. BUT IF IT IS AN ACCURATE REPORT, THEN I HOPE THE ADMINISTRATION WILL HAVE AN APPROPRIATE RESPONSE.

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IT GIVES ME NO COMFORT THAT THE WEST GERMANS MAY HAVE MADE SOME MISTAKES; AND THE FRENCH; AND THE BRITISH; AND ALMOST EVERYONE ELSE WITHIN THE ALLIANCE.

AND, TODAY, I AM NOT HAPPY THAT ONE OF OUR CLOSEST AND MOST IMPORTANT ALLIES, ISRAEL, HAS ALSO STRUCK OUT ALONE, FREE-LANCING, APPARENTLY IN THE INTEREST OF GAINING LEVERAGE TO WIN THE RELEASE OF SOME OF ITS CITIZENS HELD HOSTAGE.

I NOTE IN THIS MORNING'S WASHINGTON POST THAT ISRAELI DEFENSE MINISTER RABIN ACKNOWLEDGED THAT ISRAELI ACTIONS HAD THREATENED WESTERN HOSTAGES. HE IS ALSO QUOTED IN THE POST AS SAYING THAT ISRAEL'S ABDUCTION OF OBEID WAS CARRIED OUT "IN ACCORDANCE WITH AN ISRAELI DECISION, WITH ISRAELI CONSIDERATIONS, AND FOR THE ISRAELI CAPTIVES -- AND WITHOUT BRINGING ANY OTHER ELEMENTS INTO THE PICTURE."

I CAN UNDERSTAND, AS A HUMAN BEING, HOW THE ISRAELI GOVERNMENT WOULD BE TEMPTED TO TAKE UNILATERAL ACTION TO WIN SOME "BARGAINING CHIPS" IN ITS EFFORTS TO WIN THE RELEASE OF ITS OWN CITIZENS FROM BARBARIC CAPTURE.

BUT I CANNOT CONDONE, AS A THINKING PERSON, HOW ANY GOVERNMENT -- OURS, THE ISRAELI GOVERNMENT, OR ANY OTHER CIVILIZED GOVERNMENT -- COULD EMBARK ON THIS UNILATERAL, FREE-LANCING COURSE, WITHOUT REGARD TO THE EFFECT ON INNOCENT CITIZENS OF OTHER FRIENDLY COUNTRIES; WITHOUT REGARD TO OUR COMMON FRONT AGAINST TERRORISM.

I CANNOT CONDONE IT, ANY MORE THAN -- IN RETROSPECT -- I CAN CONDONE WHAT SOME IN OUR GOVERNMENT MAY HAVE DONE IN THE IRAN-CONTRA AFFAIR; OR THOSE IN OTHER WESTERN GOVERNMENTS MAY HAVE DONE IN OTHER SITUATIONS.

IT IS ONE OF THOSE CIRCUMSTANCES THAT CAN EASILY BE UNDERSTOOD FROM A HUMAN STANDPOINT; BUT MUST BE VIGOROUSLY DEPLORED FROM A REALISTIC STANDPOINT.

BUT WHAT IS IMPORTANT, IN ANY CASE, IS NOT WHETHER AN ACTION IS ABHORRED OR CONDONED; BUT WHETHER ALL OF US LEARN SOME LESSON FROM THE MISTAKES THAT ONE OF US HAS MADE.

WE ARE IN THIS TOGETHER. THE LINE IS BETWEEN US AND THEM; NOT US AND US.

LET US KEEP THAT LINE DISTINCT. LET US KEEP THAT LINE CLEAR IN OUR OWN MINDS.

AND LET US DEDICATE OURSELVES ANEW TO FORGE A COMMON FRONT; A COMMON, REALISTIC, TOUGH, EFFECTIVE STANCE AGAINST INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM.

LET US MAKE THIS -- NOT JUST ONE ITEM -- BUT THE TOP ITEM IN OUR CONSULTATIONS WITHIN THE ALLIANCE.

LET US MAKE THIS AGENDA ITEM NUMBER ONE AT THE NEXT ALLIANCE SUMMIT -- A SUMMIT THAT, FOR THIS DISCUSSION, AT LEAST, OUGHT TO INCLUDE ALL OF OUR ALLIES AND FRIENDS, LIKE ISRAEL, THAT ENJOY A SPECIAL PLACE IN OUR COMMON STRUGGLE AGAINST THE SCOURGE OF TERRORISM.

MR. PRESIDENT: I PRAY THAT I AM WRONG, BUT I FEAR THAT I AM RIGHT. I BELIEVE THAT COLONEL WILLIAM HIGGINS HAS BEEN MURDERED. HIS MURDER -- HIS BLOOD -- IS ON THE HANDS OF HIS ASSASSINS; THESE LUNATICS WHO HIDE BEHIND THE TITLE OF "OPPRESSED ON EARTH." THEY ARE TO BLAME FOR WILLIAM HIGGINS DEATH -- NO ONE ELSE. AND THEY SHOULD BE BROUGHT TO JUSTICE AND PUNISHED.

BUT WILLIAM HIGGINS DEATH, IF IT HAS OCCURRED, IS NOT THE END OF THE STORY. IT IS ONLY ANOTHER CHAPTER -- ANOTHER LESSON.

A LESSON THAT WILL HAVE VALUE ONLY IF IT IS LEARNED, BY ALL OF US ON OUR SIDE OF THE LINE. A LESSON THAT THERE IS A LINE DRAWN IN THE SAND -- A LINE BETWEEN CIVILIZED CONDUCT, AND BARBARISM.

A LINE THAT WE MUST UNDERSTAND, AND ACT ON -- IF THE CIVILIZATION THAT ALL OF US ON OUR SIDE OF THE LINE HOLD DEAR IS TO BE PRESERVED.