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NEWS

U. S. SENATOR FOR KANSAS

FROM:

SENATE REPUBLICAN LEADER

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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MIDDLE EAST HOSTAGES;  
SOVIET TROOPS AND CUBA

CERTAINLY, THE TWO "LANDMARK" EVENTS OF THIS YEAR HAVE BEEN OUR GREAT VICTORY IN THE PERSIAN GULF WAR, AND THE COLLAPSE OF THE SOVIET STATE AND SOVIET COMMUNISM. THE CHANGES WROUGHT BY THE DRAMATIC EVENTS CONTINUE TO UNFOLD -- AS WAS AGAIN APPARENT DURING THE PAST 24 HOURS.

ISRAEL RELEASES PRISONERS

THE DESERT STORM VICTORY HAS OPENED THE DOOR TO A POSSIBLE SOLUTION TO MANY PROBLEMS WHICH HAVE LONG VEXED THE MIDDLE EAST -- NONE MORE IMPORTANT THAN THE PROBLEM OF HOSTAGES HELD IN LEBANON AND ELSEWHERE. IT IS THEREFORE VERY GOOD NEWS, INDEED, THAT ISRAEL HAS ANNOUNCED THE RELEASE OF 51 LEBANESE PRISONERS AND THE RETURN OF THE REMAINS OF NINE OTHERS IN ITS CUSTODY. THAT ACTION FOLLOWED THE RELEASE OF INFORMATION BY THE SO-CALLED "HEZBOLLAH" SHIITE MUSLIM ORGANIZATION ON TWO ISRAELI SERVICEMEN LONG MISSING, AND NOW REPORTED DEAD.

THE FAMILIES OF OUR OWN HOSTAGES, AND OF THE OTHER HOSTAGES AND PRISONERS BEING HELD IN THE REGION, HAVE RIDDEN THE ROLLER-COASTER OF RISING HOPES AND CRASHING DISAPPOINTMENT MANY TIMES. SO IT SERVES NO GOOD PURPOSE TO LET OUR EXPECTATIONS GET AHEAD OF THE FACTS. BUT FOR ONE OF THE FEW TIMES, THIS TIME THERE IS SOME CONCRETE AND POSITIVE DEVELOPMENTS UNDERLYING THE RENEWED HOPE. SO HOPE, AND PRAY, WE DO -- THAT THIS WILL INDEED TURN OUT TO BE A BREAKTHROUGH TO THE RELEASE OF ALL HOSTAGES.

THE CASE OF RICH HIGGINS

I WOULD ALSO NOTE THAT WE MUST INSIST, WHEN AND IF OUR HOSTAGES ARE RELEASED, THAT WE ALSO OBTAIN A FULL ACCOUNTING FOR U.S. MARINE COLONEL RICH HIGGINS -- TAKEN HOSTAGE WHILE ON DUTY WITH U.N. PEACEKEEPING FORCES IN LEBANON. COLONEL HIGGINS IS BELIEVED TO HAVE BEEN MURDERED BY HIS CAPTORS, BUT WE HAVE NEVER HAD FINAL CONFIRMATION OF HIS FATE. EQUALLY IMPORTANT, IF INDEED HE IS DEAD, WE MUST DEMAND THE RETURN OF HIS REMAINS, FOR FINAL DISPOSITION BY HIS FAMILY.

I HAVE PERSONALLY PLEDGED TO HIS WIFE, MARINE MAJOR ROBIN HIGGINS, THAT I WILL NEVER REST UNTIL WE -- AND SHE -- OBTAIN THE FULL AND FINAL ACCOUNTING TO WHICH WE HAVE A RIGHT. AND I KNOW THAT ALL MEMBERS OF CONGRESS, AND PRESIDENT BUSH AND THE MEMBERS OF HIS ADMINISTRATION, SHARE THAT SAME DETERMINATION.

I WOULD ALSO NOTE THAT -- ESPECIALLY BECAUSE COLONEL HIGGINS WAS ON DUTY WITH THE U.N. AT THE TIME OF HIS CAPTURE -- IT IS ABSOLUTELY INCUMBENT UPON SECRETARY GENERAL PEREZ DE CUELLAR AND OTHER U.N. OFFICIALS INVOLVED IN THESE DELICATE NEGOTIATIONS TO KEEP COLONEL HIGGINS CASE AT THE TOP OF THEIR AGENDA.

SOVIET TROOPS OUT OF CUBA

MEANWHILE, AND ALMOST SIMULTANEOUSLY, WE HAVE HEARD THE VERY WELCOME ANNOUNCEMENT THAT THE SOVIET UNION WILL SOON WITHDRAW ITS MILITARY FORCES FROM CUBA.

AMONG A NUMBER OF SERIOUS BARRIERS TO FULLY NORMALIZED AND CORDIAL RELATIONS BETWEEN THE U.S. AND THE RAPIDLY CHANGING SOVIET UNION, NONE HAS BEEN MORE IMPORTANT THAN MOSCOW'S LONG-TIME AND LAVISH SUPPORT OF CASTRO'S COMMUNIST STATE.

UNTIL NOW, PARTIALLY PROTECTED BY THE KREMLIN'S TROOPS AND BOLSTERED BY BILLIONS OF RUBLES IN SUBSIDIES, FIDEL HAS HUNKERED DOWN BEHIND HIS OWN LITTLE IRON CURTAIN -- KEEPING THE DEMOCRATIC REVOLUTION WHICH IS SWEEPING THE REST OF THE WORLD AT ARMS LENGTH.

IF THE SOVIET FORCES ARE INDEED REMOVED -- AND IF THAT IS FOLLOWED, AS SOVIET OFFICIALS ARE PROMISING -- BY AN END TO MASSIVE SOVIET MILITARY AND ECONOMIC AID, THEN THERE WILL BE A REAL HOPE THAT THE DETERIORATION OF CASTRO'S TYRANNY WILL ACCELERATE; AND THERE WILL BE A REAL HOPE THAT SOMEDAY SOON WE MAY SEE THE RESTORATION OF FREEDOM FOR THE PEOPLE OF CUBA.

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