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NEWS

U.S. SENATOR FOR KANSAS

FROM:

SENATE MAJORITY LEADER

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BOSNIA UPDATE

AS CEASEFIRE EXPIRES, BOSNIA NO CLOSER TO PEACE DUE TO ILLEGAL EMBARGO; TIME FOR NEW POLICY BASED ON BOSNIA'S RIGHT TO SELF DEFENSE

The ceasefire in Bosnia-Herzegovina expired today. When it was announced by former President Jimmy Carter, U.S. diplomats hailed the four month truce as a "window of opportunity" to bring peace to Bosnia. Instead, it turned out to be the usual winter respite from fighting, and only an opportunity to see what little political will, if any, was left among the leaders of the international community to do anything other than play the blame game -- a game in which the victims, the Bosnians, are often blamed and always lose.

Only a year ago, NATO bombed Serbian positions in Gorazde at the belated request of the United Nations. But a year later, when Serbian planes from Croatia cross international borders to bomb Bihac, as happened this past weekend, there is not even a pretense of response. Last Monday a Peter Jennings special report on the United Nations in Bosnia aired. As the Washington Times put it, and I quote, "If there was anyone out there still who believed that the United Nations has been playing a constructive role in the Balkan conflict, Monday night's ABC News special with Peter Jennings ought to have disabused them of the notion.... As a result of the lack of response from the United Nations, as a result of finding their aggression virtually unopposed, the Bosnian Serbs were emboldened.... And they have lost all respect for the will of the international community."

International Community Prolonged War With Illegal Embargo

The reality is that as Bosnia enters its fourth year of war it is no closer to peace than it was when the war started. The international community has prolonged the war by imposing, in practice, an illegal arms embargo on Bosnia which has effectively protected the Serbian war machine. Moreover, the leaders of the U.N. forces have increasingly indulged the Bosnian Serbs by acquiescing to their outrageous and illegitimate demands -- which included denying the U.S. Ambassador to Bosnia passage on a U.N. flight.

Need Policy Based on Bosnian Self-Defense

It should be clear to all by now that the policies of the international community have failed. It should also be clear that the Bosnians have no intention of surrendering their country and their future because Bosnia is an inconvenience to international leaders. It is high time to devise a new policy -- a policy based on the concept of Bosnian self-defense. This does not have to be an all or nothing proposition. Some troop contributors, like the British and French, may want to leave. Others, like the Pakistanis and Malaysians, may want to increase their force levels. What is needed is a plan centered around lifting the arms embargo on Bosnia and Herzegovina and putting Bosnia's future back into Bosnian hands -- where it belongs.

Over the coming weeks, supporters of the Dole-Lieberman bill will be watching developments in Bosnia-Herzegovina closely. We will also be watching the administration to see if it has any real initiatives beyond high level meetings that produce worthless paper and pronouncements. Time has just about run out; in the absence of administration leadership, we will act.

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