

Dole puts bitterness of '88 campaign behind him

By Helen Dewar
The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — Just over two years ago, the presidential ambitions of Sen. Robert J. Dole, R-Kan., collapsed in New Hampshire after a devastating television assault by then-Vice President George Bush, who portrayed Dole as "Senator Straddle," an equivocator who could not be trusted to hold the line against tax increases.

An angry, embittered Dole returned to Washington to face what he now acknowledges was a difficult year. When Bush was sworn in as president, Republicans at both ends of Pennsylvania Avenue braced for a fireworks display of retaliation from the proud, prickly Republican leader of the Senate.

It never came. Instead, Dole became the president's foremost ally in Capitol Hill, suppressing any temptation for revenge as he helped Bush rack up a series of political victories in the Democratic-controlled Congress, including an unbroken string of 10 sustained vetoes.

He bit his sharp tongue and seldom strayed from the Bush line, even on issues such as the federal budget and U.S. policy toward China, on which Dole has staked out more aggressive positions in the past.

Acknowledging that age will probably bar another bid for the presidency in 1996, when he would be 73, Dole has thrown himself back into his Senate work, branching out more into foreign policy and taking controversial stands on issues such as aid to Israel. During congressional recesses, when he isn't on a foreign trip, he is campaigning for Republican Senate candidates, and friends say he has now set his sights on a GOP takeover of the Senate in 1992 and a capping of his political career as majority leader.

"From my vantage point, the president should be well pleased with the way Dole is conducting things as Republican leader," said Senate Majority Leader George J. Mitchell, D-Maine, who engages in daily combat with Dole, the president's point man in the Senate.

"Bob really has gone to the mat with us to say, 'This is one the president really wants,'" said Minority Whip Alan K. Simpson, R-Wyo. "It's the real pro in him. ... The proof is in the delivery, and Bob Dole has delivered."

Memories of New Hampshire linger, however. Asked how he feels now that Bush will be relying heavily on "Senator Straddle" to help reach a budget compromise with the Democrats that many believe will include tax increases, Dole smiled broadly and said, "I think it's called irony."



Sen. Bob Dole

To a friendly audience, he joked recently that he may ask New Hampshire for a recount.

While these remarks indicate that Dole may not have forgotten, they are a far cry from the withering retorts that have long been his political trademark. Eighteen months into the Bush presidency, colleagues describe relations between the two men as unfailingly polite, somewhere between correct and cordial. "Quite businesslike," says Mitchell, who meets frequently with both men at joint leadership sessions at the White House.

Despite Bush-Dole generational bonds and their years of association in Republican politics, there was a vast distance between the manicured lawns of the Bush estate in Greenwich, Conn., and the cornfields of Russell, Kan., where Dole grew up, that the two men never bridged, according to senators who are friends of both. The bitterness of their clash of presidential ambitions, more so for loser Dole than winner Bush, has made even trust a major achievement.

Sitting in his Capitol office, which commands a sweeping view of the Mall as it leads toward the White House, Dole recently discussed his relations with Bush with a mix of caution and candor, lifting the curtain only fleetingly on his feelings about the president.

"I think we have a good relationship, but obviously it (took) a while for those things to heal over," he said. "Some things were said. ..."

he continued, never finishing the sentence.

Dole conceded that "there was a period of time early when the White House was not certain about Bob Dole, whether he could de-

liver." But "I think that was sort of laid to rest during the Tower nomination" fight, he added in reference to his relentless, although losing, battle to win Senate confirmation of former senator John G. Tower, R-Tex., as secretary of defense early last year.

As of now, "I don't think the president or anyone in the White House has any trouble with me," Dole said, although some White House aides continue to express apprehension about Dole's motives and dependability in a crunch.

His New Hampshire defeat has "got to eat away at him," said Sen. Warren B. Rudman, R-N.H., who managed Dole's campaign in the state. "That wasn't just a bitter experience, it was devastating. To come out of Iowa (where Dole won), to come to New Hampshire with huge crowds at the airport, to tour the state for five days and to be told you're ahead in the polls and then to get hit with that tax stuff and then see it all dashed — that's tough," Rudman said.

In the year following the New Hampshire primary, "I think Bob was more quiet, more restrained, obviously deeply affected by the experience. But he sure has bounced back. ... Now he's the old Bob Dole," Rudman added.

According to Republican lawmakers, both Bush and Dole have gone out of their way to repair their relationship with personal gestures of solicitude. When the Senate early last year sustained Bush's first veto of a bill — the measure guaranteeing U.S. residency to Chinese students — Dole dispatched an aide to get the vote tally, signed it with a warm personal note and sent it to the president as a trophy of victory. "George (Bush) was quite touched by that," said Simpson.

Months later, when Bush heard that Dole's sister was undergoing chemotherapy in Kansas, Bush called the Republican leader to offer the services of his personal physician. "I thought that was very thoughtful, very nice," said Dole.

After Mitchell unleashed an attack on the president's policies toward China late last month, Dole got in touch with Bush almost immediately, and Bush responded with appreciation the next day. But in a kind of metaphor for their relationship, they communicated by faxed letters.

What about another run for the presidency? "I don't think it's possible. Age gets to be a barrier. ... I gave it my best shot," Dole said matter-of-factly. "But I think being the leader (in the Senate) is pretty important," he said, his eyes brightening. "What we're trying to do now is change one word: from minority to majority."

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Israel lobby and Dole create sparks

Kansas senator is seen as rebuking our Mideast ally.

By JAKE THOMPSON
Washington Correspondent

WASHINGTON — Sen. Bob Dole may be the only powerful congressman frank and stubborn enough to take on the pro-Israel lobby.

He may also be the only one strong enough to survive it.

The Israeli lobby not only is considered an effective one, boasting tens of thousands of members and a \$7 million annual budget, but it also has become a legendary power.

Some credit the lobby with unseating two

former congressmen who were construed to be anti-Israel; some also credit it with helping to put others in office.

Dole has remained undaunted.

Over the last year, the Senate minority leader from Kansas has made four comments widely viewed as rebukes of Israel.

The commentaries dismayed American Jews, Christian backers of Israel and the pro-Israel American Israel Public Affairs Committee, one of the most potent lobbying forces in America.

But Dole said that among his colleagues,

Capitol CONFLICT



Bob Dole

and the Israel lobby

"First of two parts"

January, the American Israel Public Affairs Committee fired off a pithy counterpunch: "Why hurt an old friend to help a new friend?"

It then aggressively sought to explain the strategic importance of Israel in the Middle East on Capitol Hill. Dole responded in April by calling the pro-Israel lobby "short-sighted and selfish."

his most controversial plan — to trim U.S. aid to Israel by 5 percent and use that money to help Eastern Europe and Latin America — has been winning in the Senate cloakroom, if not on the Senate floor.

The senator says his 26-year congressional record of backing Israel should allow a friend to advise a friend.

But as soon as Dole's aid plan surfaced in January, the American Israel Public Affairs Committee fired off a pithy counterpunch: "Why hurt an old friend to help a new friend?"

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A couple of weeks ago, Dole met with the

public affairs committee's executive director, Tom Dine, to try to cool the animosity.

Before the meeting, Dine said in an interview the senator had "certainly clouded up the atmosphere" of longstanding congressional support for Israel, lending ammunition for its Arab adversaries, which may harm Israel.

Dine warned, "We're going to work to make sure Israel has the funds necessary to protect itself, partly because the Soviet Union continues to arm Syria and Iraq."

Effective lobby

The American Israel Public Affairs Committee, the only official representative of the Israeli government on Capitol Hill, See **FRICION, A-18, Col. 1**

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protects Israel's interests remarkably well.

The lobby has connections with the White House, in key congressional committees, at the Pentagon, at the State Department, within other governmental agencies and to Jewish groups across the nation. It often helps to shape, boost or marshall defeat of legislation concerning Israel and the entire foreign aid package, say Capitol Hill sources.

"I think AIPAC is a very effective lobby," said Sen. Nancy Landon Kassebaum, a Kansas Republican and member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. "You may agree with them or disagree with them, but they are extremely plugged in to what's going on."

Lynn Cutler, vice chairman of the Democratic National Committee, said that when she ran for Congress she "made a stop" at the committee because their information on the Middle East was accurate and useful.

"I think they're very powerful," Cutler said. "Without question they've made a difference for Isra-

el. I think a lot of senators and representatives come to rely on them for their expertise. But there's not some cabal here."

Indeed, to some the organization is no more influential than lobbies for the bankers, doctors or American teachers. But among lobbies for a foreign country it has no peer.

It gains access to members of Congress because many of them are already intensely interested in the fate of Israel and alarmed at aggression from its Arab neighbors.

"AIPAC mobilizes sentiments that are already there," said Rep. Barney Frank, a Massachusetts Democrat and a careful observer of the lobby. "I don't think people react to the lobby. They react to the issues and most members are sympathetic to Israel. AIPAC rides the wave much more than they create it."

A surprise

The wave that has washed over Dole this spring surprised the senator. It began last August, after Lebanese radicals reportedly executed U.S. Marine Lt. Col. Wil-

liam Higgins in retaliation for Israel's kidnapping of a Moslem leader, Sheikh Obeid.

"We cannot apologize for Israeli actions in this country when it endangers the lives of Americans in some far-off country," Dole said on the Senate floor, drawing Israel's anger. "And perhaps a little more responsibility on the part of the Israelis one of these days would be refreshing."

Early this year Dole proposed that the United States should trim foreign aid to Israel and the four other largest recipients by 5 percent to help Eastern Europe and Latin America.

When he drew up his aid proposal Dole wasn't focused on Israel but more consumed with trying to find money to aid emerging democracies in a tight budget environment, an aide said.

The public affairs committee's response, which was immediately to contact congressional members and staffers, drew attention to Israel, not the four others: Egypt, Pakistan, Turkey and the Philippines. Israel receives the biggest share of U.S. foreign aid, about 20 percent of the total \$15 billion

pie.

Dole also aroused concern by suggesting he supported a \$400 million loan guarantee to Israel to help resettle emigrating Soviet Jews but seemed to draw back over questions whether Israel was spending the money in the occupied territories.

Then in April, after returning from a tour of the Middle East, Dole said a resolution the Senate had just passed promoting Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, a hotly contested issue among Jews, Christians and Muslims, had been a mistake. On the trip Arab leaders had battered Dole about the resolution, which he said caused him to renounce his own support.

He has continued to press Israel. Early this month Dole said on the Senate floor Israel should re-examine whether it could have stopped recent violence in the occupied territories and should get its government in order, so it can work toward peace.

Friction in America

Hearing pointed views from so prominent a member of Congress has triggered a strong reaction

from the Jewish community.

At one recent Jewish meeting in Florida the gathering boomed when Dole's name was mentioned. Dozens of letters have come into his Senate office questioning his motives. He has met with several dozen Jewish leaders besides Dine.

"His recent actions and words I find tragic," said Hyman Bookbinder, a longtime Washington representative for the American Jewish Committee. "It reflects a lack of patience with a difficult process that's going on in the Middle East. I do not consider him anti-Israel. By his comments, though, he has become the darling of the anti-Israel forces."

But Bookbinder said: "I am not now advocating the Jewish community engage in a political vendetta against him. I would hope that in the best sense of the word he would clean up his act before the next election."

In Kansas City, Allan Abrams, head of the American Jewish Committee, said he is disturbed by Dole, who is up for re-election in 1992. Abrams said that because of its size in Kansas, "The Jewish

voting bloc is not going to make any difference in Dole's re-election prospects."

Two others may feel less fortunate.

Former Rep. Paul Findley, an Illinois Republican, was defeated in 1982 and former Illinois Republican Sen. Charles Percy was defeated in 1984 in campaigns where their opponents received heavy donations from pro-Israel political action committees. The two former congressmen were perceived as anti-Israel.

Findley, in his book *They Dare to Speak Out*, said that Dine claimed the American Israel Public Affairs Committee and the pro-Israel community torpedoed both congressmen.

In a political campaign today, one congressional staffer said, an incumbent would worry about the committee's influence at the primary level, when voting participation is low. With a concerted effort, "AIPAC can recruit, finance, educate" and put that against an incumbent, he said.

He added, "That is the underlying reason right now there is not more political courage."