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"I think there was surprise to some in the Bush White House ... you know, how can the loser be loyal to the winner?"
Sen. Bob Dole, Senate minority leader

Joel Sartore/The Wichita Eagle

Sen. Bob Dole is used to a spotlight, but there are rumors that the state's senior senator is considering retiring before the 1992 election.

Loyal opposition

Dole forgets battles with Bush to lead Senate GOP

By Angela Herrin
Eagle Washington bureau

WASHINGTON — In the middle of the fractious battles over the federal budget last fall, when Republican senators were arguing in a tense closed-door session, Republican leader Bob Dole abruptly interrupted the bickering.

"Well, maybe we ought to just elect a new leader. Is that what you want to do now?" Dole reportedly demanded.

The room fell silent, as the senators eyed each other in embarrassment —

but the debate resumed in a more conciliatory tone. Ever the deft negotiator, Dole understood his offer would startle: Because on Capitol Hill these days, the Kansas Republican commands the office of Senate Minority Leader in a way that even some in his own party would not have predicted two years ago.

Although Dole lost the Republican presidential nomination to George Bush in a bitter fight in New Hampshire in 1988, he returned to the Senate to become chief standard-bearer for a man

who was once his bitter enemy.

And for the past two years Dole has done the job in a manner marked both by its careful display of loyalty and by its adroit political maneuvering of an often recalcitrant 45-member Republican minority — soon to be 44 members — in the Senate.

"Politicians understand, appreciate and respect loyalty; and Bob Dole has shown a tremendous, tremendous amount of it," says Sen. Phil Gramm, R-Texas.

"He made a decision after that election in 1988 to come back as a team player and an enthusiastic team player, too. ... He has had to bring together and negotiate some tough deals here."

Dole claims he wasn't the one who expected trouble with the Bush White House after 1988.

"I think there was surprise to some in the Bush White House ... you know, how can the loser be loyal to the win-

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6-A The Topeka Capital-Journal, Persian Gulf crisis

Sen. Dole remains optimistic

By BARRY MASSEY
Associated Press writer

WASHINGTON — Senate Minority Leader Bob Dole, R-Kan., said Friday he was optimistic war can be averted in the Persian Gulf, but stressed that much depended on upcoming talks between the United States and Iraq.

Secretary of State James A. Baker III is to meet next week in Switzerland with Iraqi Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz.

Dole said the talks were critical for preventing war.

"If we don't meet there will be no discussions, and if there are no discussions, then we're probably going to have a war," Dole said in a telephone news conference with Kansas broadcasters.

Iraq announced Friday that Aziz would meet with Baker on Wednesday in Geneva. Dole suggested that such a meeting might lead to other talks, possibly with Iraqi President Saddam Hussein.

"I'm still optimistic. I still think it can be avoided," Dole said of the outlook for war. "But it's going to take some action on the part of Saddam Hussein. He's got to move. He can't have it both ways."

A U.N. resolution authorizes the use of military force if Iraq fails to withdraw its occupation forces from Kuwait by Jan. 15.

Dole said the Bush administration shouldn't view the deadline as "doomsday" and must not rush the decision to use military force.

"I think we've got to let the American people know and demonstrate that we're going to try everything we can to get a peaceful resolution before somebody starts shooting," Dole said.

The senator said the American public wasn't "on board" and fully convinced yet of the need to use military force in the Persian Gulf, but were moving toward that conclusion.

"Every time the president makes a gesture, every time he's willing to send Secretary of State Baker to talk with the Iraqis, that helps him ... and it brings more support from the American people," said Dole.

He said Congress should have a "period of restraint" for a week to 10 days to avoid a divisive fight over Persian Gulf policy while the administration talks with Iraq.

Congress ultimately must debate the gulf crisis, Dole said, but it is doubtful that lawmakers will quickly adopt a resolution similar to the U.N. measure authorizing the use of military force.

"But the thing we've got to do is take a stand. And what I see now is a lot of talk and no votes, and I think if we're not going to vote, then we shouldn't be talking until Jim Baker has met with Foreign Minister Aziz," said Dole.

The standoff in the gulf, Dole said, has raised a constitutional question over the roles of Congress and the president in military actions.

Dole said he believed the president had the power to launch an attack against Iraq without prior authorization from Congress, but "you would see him coming to Congress very shortly afterward."

On related issue, Dole said the Pentagon has imposed a moratorium on congressional trips to Saudi Arabia because of concerns the visits would interfere with military preparations. January 5, 1991.



Sen. Bob Dole

Dole expects Congress to support Bush

By Ray Hemman
The Hutchinson News

If Congress ultimately can't agree with President George Bush's Persian Gulf policy, then it should say nothing at all, Sen. Bob Dole said Friday.

"No message to Saddam Hussein would be better than a bad message," Dole said during a telephone press conference with Kansas journalists from his Washington, D.C., office. "I can't believe the

(Senate) Democrats would be so partisan that they would, at this eleventh hour, try to (derail the president). They are out there saying they support President Bush;

they want to get Iraq out of Kuwait. But what they are doing, in effect, is protecting Saddam Hussein. They are trying to save his bacon."

Dole did not say whether he would support a Senate filibuster if Democrats attempted to push through legislation that would not allow the president to proceed with war.

Nevertheless, Dole said he felt Congress would go on record giving the president a military option in the Gulf after the Jan. 15 deadline. As many as eight to 10 Senate Democrats may vote with the Republicans on the issue, he said.

At the same time, if the Democrats who oppose the military option prevail, "Saddam Hussein could go on a vacation."

At the outset of the press conference, Dole said he wanted to give the president

the "strongest hand possible for peace." A Democratic resolution that would give economic sanctions more time to work is not in that situation's best interest, he said.

On the other hand, passing a resolution that would give the president all means necessary to resolve the Persian Gulf crisis would bring more pressure to bear on Hussein.

Dole said he and other senators planned to introduce a resolution Friday that was similar to one offered by a bipartisan group in the House. The House resolution gives the president a military option in the Gulf.

The senator said that despite U.N. Secretary General Javier Perez de Cuellar's trip to Iraq this weekend, he sees the

situation "tilting more and more toward an armed conflict."

"My view is that the secretary general is bound by the U.N. resolutions — 12 of them," Dole said. "I don't feel that it (the meeting between de Cuellar and Hussein) will be a negotiation unless the Iraqis realize their number is up, it's high noon, and Hussein starts back-tracking. ... In that way they could avoid a conflict."

Above all else, Hussein needs to realize he's not dealing with the Iranian army in this conflict, Dole said.

"He (Hussein) is not going to be fighting with Iran with no air force," Dole said. "If he looks at all the forces gathered from all over the world, he'll see a massive force arrayed against Iraq. Unless he wants to be a martyr, he ought to want a peaceful settlement."

As Republican leader, Dole has to walk a careful line between the Bush administration and the members of the Senate. Some of those conservative GOP senators want the Republicans to take more confrontational positions with Democrats in the Senate — and the White House if they have to — on issues such as taxes.

In 1988, Dole's voting record showed the Kansas supported Bush 94 percent of the time: this year Congressional Quarterly says Dole backed the president 80 percent of the time, but lined up 95 percent of the time with the Senate's conservative coalition of Republicans and Southern Democrats. That survey, however, gives equal weight to major and minor votes on which the White House has declared a position: a Dole aide last week called it "astounding" that Dole's rating was not higher.

In contrast, Sen. Nancy Kassebaum, R-Kansas, supported Bush 68 percent of the time, according to the survey.

In the 102nd Congress, with one less Republican in the Senate, forging compromises between White House and Senate will be even more frustrating than the past year, Dole said. That change is a factor that he is considering as he weighs his re-election bid in 1992.

"The election results were very discouraging, not just in Kansas, but in the Senate," Dole said. "In July, we thought we were sort of golden, we thought we could pick up two or three seats. Then you get into the budget mess, and everything starts going downhill for the president ... so we end up losing one seat."

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DOLE Crisis forces Bush's aides to seek friends

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ner?" Dole said.

"I never had any problem. My view is that my responsibility is as Republican leader and to the presidency and Bush himself. I think there were some of my colleagues who thought it wouldn't happen ... but I think we've done a pretty good job."

Not all the wounds are healed. Dole admits there are always "little reminders" such as news stories pointing out that his former rival is recanting his hard-line position on issues like tax increases and oil import fees. Bush used those issues to label Dole "Senator Straddle" in 1988. Dole supporters can be even less gracious on that point.

"Looks like Bush has accepted the final plank of the Dole platform. Guess we should call HIM President Straddle now, huh?" one Dole aide said recently.

But Dole himself maintains a careful decorum in talking about relations with the White House. On the Senate floor last month, he described the cantankerous White House chief of staff John Sununu as "chief of chaff" — a slip of the tongue, Dole insisted, which was corrected when it appeared in the Congressional Record transcript.

In turn, White House officials such as Sununu publicly praise Dole as an ally. The relationship was strengthened, Dole says, in months of bitter fighting over the budget, a slipping economy and the tension of the Persian Gulf — at a time when many voters seemed to think the Bush administration was floundering.

"I think very honestly when you're rocking along at 75 and 80 percent in the polls, people in the White House can be pretty tough. But when you get down to 50 percent, you need friends," Dole said. "So when you are up there on top you may think you don't need anyone whether it is politics, business or anything else ... you better always look down and see where you might land."

White House officials and senators credit Dole with smoothing relations that were often troubled between the Senate and White House officials such as Sununu last fall.

"A major part of Dole's strength as a leader is recognizing when people have made up their minds and saying, 'OK, now we have to put the deal together,'" a Democratic Senate aide said. "Unfortunately, some White House people thought they could stomp up here, slap their demand on the table and sit back. This lack of respect must have driven Bob Dole nuts — but he rarely showed it."

Dole is fiercely proud of the fact that he keeps close counsel on his disagreements with the White House, but he wants to make it clear he is listened to at the White House when he does disagree privately.

"That gets down to the question of leadership," Dole said. "You read all this stuff, about people going to the White House and then holding a press conference. ... It's all hanging out to dry down there."

"Well, I'm not quoted anywhere. I'm not looking for that. (But) we still want to have input. We don't want, by silence, to infer that we think (U.S. Rep. Newt) Gingrich (R-Ga.) ought to write the Republican agenda ... or anybody else. But we have input."

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"Now you've got the Gulf crisis, the recession, things in general. It's

not going to be a very exciting two years. Everything is going to be decisions people are not particularly going to like."

Dole will be 69 when his Senate seat is up in 1992, 75 at the end of that term if he runs again and wins. His health is good, he said. He can now do an hour and a half on his office treadmill on weekends, he proudly reports.

His wife, former Labor Secretary Elizabeth Dole, who just took over as head of the American Red Cross, has no political plans that collide with his own, he said. "She has no political plans; she has Red Cross plans," he said.

Dole refused to say if rumors that he had considered retirement in 1992 were true — but he also made of point of describing his recent trips to Kansas to "sniff out things."

"It's too early to tell. I've still got over two years, and I'm not in any hurry to indicate that," Dole said. "I've been telling (Kansans) I'm thinking about a number of things."

Kansas Republicans say they, too, have heard the rumors that Dole might quit: Reporters from Washington were making phone calls last week to several Kansas GOP leaders.

"But it's sort of impossible to imagine an era without Dole — among Republicans he still has the biggest network in Kansas," said state Rep. Rochelle Chronister, of Neodesha, head of the state GOP.

Dole's fund-raising activities have all the sign of Senate candidacy. This year, he raised \$340,000 for Dole for Senate, bringing his campaign war chest to \$1.2 million. He has also

been busy raising money for other candidates and for his political action committee, Campaign America. Last year, he raised \$1.2 million for that PAC, giving \$238,884 to other candidates.

He traveled the country for Republican candidates last fall: the National Republican Campaign Committee reports Dole was one of the most popular choices for speeches and fund-raising.

Dole also has traveled extensively over the past 18 months, more than he had ever done in his Senate career. The trips included visits to the Middle East and across Eastern Europe and Russia. He led a group of senators on a visit to Saudi Arabia shortly after the crisis in the Middle East began.

Dole joked recently that even those trips had a political purpose. "I've been looking around for a country where I could be elected president — I've tried this one," Dole said recently at a Capitol Hill fund-raiser.

Dole also was surprised this year by the public attention trained on his efforts to include Kansas projects in several appropriations bills. One project in particular, \$125,000 for a study of setting up a national recreation area at Wilson Lake near Dole's home county, drew fire in stories about pork-barrel projects such as the \$500,000 requested for Lawrence Welk's birthplace.

"I'm not going to try to defend it, I'm going to try to do what I can," Dole said. "I'm willing to cut, freeze and eliminate, but if at the end there is 50 cents, I want a penny of it for Kansas."

However, Dole was touchy about the media attention about Wilson Lake, calling it "totally overblown."

"I could have just gotten the money, just said I want \$5 million for Wilson Lake, but I said instead let's do a study," Dole said. "It's a very unique opportunity there. We've got people who can't afford to go to Yosemite. They never get out of the county so why can't we do something for the hard-working people in the area?"

"The leader has to take a lot of heat around this place. You upset a lot of people. Even some in your own state. So if there is anything you get out of leadership, you better get it for your state."