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Republican senators defy Dole on Bosnia

By KATHARINE Q. SEELYE
The New York Times

WASHINGTON — Unable to convince a group of fellow Republicans that Bosnia is worth the loss of one American life,

“We’ve been together on almost every issue for the whole year. At this juncture, I don’t see how we will be together on this one.”

— Sen. Trent Lott

In separate letters, they commended Dole for supporting the peace-keeping mission of U.S. troops in Bosnia after President Clinton made the commitment to send them.

Ford and Bush also urged Congress to adopt resolutions supporting the deployment even if many questions remain unanswered.

“To undercut America’s course of action at this juncture would do enor-

Republican senators defy Dole

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mous damage to U.S. leadership in the eyes of the whole world,” Ford wrote. “We would be seen as totally unreliable.”

Bush commended Dole for “putting the interests of our country ahead of politics,” adding, “His decision may not be politically popular in the short run but, in my view, it is right.”

In the short run, however, the wholesale loss of conservative support in the Senate may force Dole to rely on solid support from Democrats.

That could prove politically embarrassing to Dole, the leading contender for the Republican presidential nomination, who has presented himself to the Republican primary electorate as the man in Washington who knows how to get things done.

“There are big problems with the caucus,” Lott, the majority whip, said of the 53 Republican senators. The debate over Bosnia marks the first time Lott has split publicly with Dole.

“We’ve been together on almost every issue for the whole year,” Lott said. “At this juncture, I don’t see how we will be together on this one. I have consulted my constituents, my conscience and the situation, and I’m not comfortable” with putting U.S. ground troops in harm’s way with no vital U.S. interest at stake.

“I don’t think he has the votes,” said Sen. James Inhofe, R-Okla., and leader of the splinter group of two dozen conservatives who oppose deployment of U.S. ground troops in the Balkans. But Inhofe predicted Dole could probably get something passed even without the conservatives’ support.

Tactically acknowledging he would need Democrats, Dole said in an acid aside that he expected to get more than 11 of them, which was the number of Democrats who supported President George Bush on the Persian Gulf war.

Indeed it was clear that Democrats would make up most of Dole’s support. Sen. Tom Daschle, the Democratic leader, said, “Senator Dole is really providing leadership

here, and my intention is to take my cues from him.”

President Clinton doesn’t need a resolution from Congress to deploy the troops, who have already started landing in Bosnia anyway. But the administration is working to secure congressional blessing, and Dole has been Clinton’s chief ally on Capitol Hill on the matter, which is making him easy fodder for his rivals for the presidential nomination.

“I think Senator Bob Dole is making a mistake in going along with a policy I believe he must have genuine, grave doubts about,” said Patrick Buchanan, the conservative columnist and presidential candidate, who was campaigning in New Hampshire on Tuesday. He said Congress “shouldn’t rubber stamp” a policy he says Americans don’t believe in.

Dole, who said he told Clinton on Tuesday morning that “we have a real problem on the exit strategy,” said Tuesday he still expected to pass a resolution before the signing of an agreement, scheduled for Dec. 14 in Paris, which commits the United States to sending 20,000 troops to the Balkans as part of a NATO peacekeeping force.

“The troops are already being deployed, and we better be very careful on what we say or what we do,” Dole said, cautioning that mixed signals from Capitol Hill could undermine the troops.

He added that the final resolution would say “right up front, we don’t agree with the president’s policy.” But, he added, “that’s history. The president has made a commitment — that’s what we’ll be supporting.”

Lott and others object to this construct. Just because Clinton has made a decision and the troops are already landing, Lott said, “I’m not going to endorse a wrong decision after the fact.”

As for sending mixed signals, Inhofe said he had talked to soldiers who said “they were concerned they hadn’t been told what their mission was.”

The Associated Press contributed to this report.

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On Dole abortion politics

Bob Dole in 1974 was probably the first U.S. Senate candidate to successfully capitalize on the 1973 Supreme Court Roe vs. Wade decision that legalized abortion. Mr. Dole, if the creek doesn’t rise or he doesn’t do something especially stupid, will be the Republican’s nominee for president in 1996.

He is pro-life, but not of the Pat Buchanan let’s-lead-a-Crusade variety, although two prominent people who’ve worked for national pro-life organizations have joined Sen. Dole’s campaign team. Still, Bob Dole is not currently the absolutist that right-to-life and other anti-abortion groups might prefer.

He recently refused to sign a pledge to support the anti-

incumbent Republicans. Bob Dole’s reelection bid was in jeopardy because he had been a Nixon ally and confidant, although never implicated in any Watergate wrongdoing.

Sen. Dole’s opponent was popular Democratic U.S. Rep. Bill Roy from Topeka. It looked like the time was right for Democrats to win a Kansas Senate seat for the first time since 1939. Dr. Roy, an ob-gyn and an attorney, was ahead in the polls until Mr. Dole played the abortion card.

He pointed out that Dr. Roy had performed abortions. Dr. Roy responded that although he personally opposed abortion, as a doctor he had had to perform abortions. He said he would prefer Congress not pass any legislation on the subject, either for it or against it.

At the Kansas State Fair in Hutchinson after Labor Day, during a debate between the two candidates, Dole accused Roy of being for “abortion on demand.” He attacked him for not sponsoring a right-to-life amendment.

Rep. Roy’s 9 percent lead began to dwindle away. Dole’s cause was helped by newspaper ads paid for by the Eastern Kansas Right to Life organization that featured a skull and crossbones and urged votes for Dole. Dole refused to repudiate the extra-curricular campaign activity on his behalf and on the Sunday before Tuesday’s vote, flyers featuring the skull and crossbones motif were put on cars in church parking lots all over the state.

Dole won by a few thousand votes. Dr. Roy was quoted as saying, “I was flat out beat on the abortion issue.” If, he lamented, he had been an attorney only, instead of both an attorney and a physician, he would have won.

Bob Dole’s current stand on abortion could get a lot more hard-nosed during the ensuing presidential race. If the polls indicate he is behind late in the game, he could get the pro-life troops out to vote by taking a leaf from his precedent-setting anti-abortion campaign in 1974.

At least Bill Clinton can thank his lucky stars he is only an attorney and not both an attorney and a doctor.

Not that the relatively moderate Mr. Dole isn’t quite capable of becoming an anti-abortion zealot if there is a political necessity for doing so.



MYRLE ROE

EDITORIAL WRITER

abortion plank in the Republican Party platform. He agrees with fetal research which strict pro-lifers do not. At a recent meeting of the Christian Coalition, he chose to focus his abortion comments on late-term abortions only. He appears to fervently hope the abortion issue will go away. He says he does not want it to be a litmus test for being a Republican.

Not that the relatively moderate Mr. Dole — when compared, say, to Pat Buchanan — isn’t quite capable of becoming an anti-abortion zealot if there is a political necessity for doing so. Bob Dole can read the polls like anyone else. He knows that two-thirds of the Republicans are — to one degree or another — supportive of abortion rights. He calculates he has the votes of those folks. He needs, however, as many of the anti-abortion absolutists as possible from the other one-third.

For a look at what he might well do if he needs even more of those absolutists — Republicans and Democrats — in a presidential campaign, consider the aforementioned Dole 1974 Senate reelection campaign. Voters were so disgusted with Richard Nixon and Watergate that they voted in droves for anybody but

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Dole fails to sway his allies on Bosnia

By Katharine Q. Seelye
New York Times News Service

WASHINGTON — Unable to convince a group of fellow Republicans that Bosnia is worth the loss of one American life, Sen. Bob Dole, the Republican leader, Tuesday postponed until next week Senate debate on a resolution supporting President Clinton’s deployment of U.S. troops.

Among those breaking with Dole are his second-in-command, Sen. Trent Lott of Mississippi, and Sen. Alfonse D’Amato of New York, perhaps his chief political backer in the Senate.

The wholesale loss of conservative support in the Senate would not necessarily doom the resolution, which Dole had hoped to vote on this week. But he almost certainly would have to rely on solid support from Democrats.

That could prove politically embarrassing to Dole, the leading contender for the Republican presidential nomination, who has presented himself to the GOP primary electorate as the man in Washington who knows how to get things done.

“There are big problems with the caucus,” Lott, the majority whip, said of the 53 Republican senators. The debate over Bosnia marks the first time that Lott has split publicly with Dole.

“We’ve been together on almost every issue for the whole year,” Lott said. “At this juncture, I don’t see how

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Senator Dole True-Blue; A Great American

Senator Bob Dole has again demonstrated that he is true-blue, a patriotic American who believes in putting his country ahead of politics. Immediately after President Bill Clinton announced his intention to send American forces into Bosnia, Dole threw his support to the president.

“We only have one president,” he said, “and the president sets the foreign policy of this nation. In this effort he deserves bipartisan support.”

Dole knows that our entry into the war-torn area is risky business, and that American soldiers will be killed. He also knows that the mission may fail.

But the front-runner of the Republicans vying for the Republican nomination for the presidency also realizes that the United States is the leader of the world, and that if you’re going to be the leader, you have to be out front leading the parade. If you aren’t, you won’t be the leader long, and you leave your nation open to challenge.

Dole has experienced the havocs of war and suffered its injuries. He was a leader in the Po Valley of northern Italy during World War II, and as a platoon leader he did not send his men on missions, he led them. He knew the risks, and he assumed them. He never sent someone else to provide the leadership that was his responsibility. He did it himself.

The North American Treaty Organization, launched by President Harry S. Truman, who appointed a Kansan, General Dwight D. Eisenhower, as its first commander, is not perfect, but it has played a superior role in keeping the peace in Europe since shortly after WWII. Without it there is no way to determine the wars, the invasions, nor the millions who might have been killed, raped, maimed or made homeless in the last 47 years. And without the support of the United States, the U.N. has been able to keep the peace only because of the support given it throughout its history by America.

Dole may not completely agree with the mission, but he feels that the president’s decision should be respected, and that American GIs should be given all the support and materials needed to keep the peace. He maintains that the president has wide leeway to conduct foreign policy.

Dole undoubtedly also realizes that without a strong U.S. presence in the Balkans, the conflict, which has raged for four years and resulted in the deaths of a quarter million people, will probably worsen, possibly enlarge into other European countries, and run the risk of reviving old rivalries and conflicts.

Dole realizes that the U.S. cannot again become isolationist. He remembers what happened in Europe between world War I and World War II, when the U.S. remained on the sideline and refused to become a member of the League of Nations. He recalls there was no one to stop either Hitler, Mussolini, Stalin, or Hirohito, and he does not want to see this vacuum created again. After all, Dole majored in history while an undergraduate student at Washburn University at Topeka in the late 1940s.

Dole also realizes that if the Bosnia effort is successful, it may cost him the presidency. Clinton will get all the credit, but the Senate majority leader feels it is important that he support his president and America’s men and women who will be placed in harms way.

Three cheers for Bob Dole. He again has demonstrated that he is a great American and will make a terrific president. —A.D.E.

Hutchinson News Thursday, December 7, 1995

Dole shouldn’t encourage Bosnia mission

We cannot be an isolationist country, as has been suggested by some, and enjoyed by our grandparents and previous generations.

The age of ICBMs, terrorism, nuclear capabilities and interwoven economies has ended that dream or possibility. However, to inject ourselves militarily into a civil war that has factions separated by centuries of old bitterness is nothing short of insane.

In recent decades, these bitter and warring factions have only been held in check because they were under a Soviet-dominated empire that wouldn’t tolerate nationalism. Our attempt to intervene won’t cure the situation any more than the Soviets did. It must be cured by the participants themselves.

To send 20,000 American fighting men to this war-torn area and call them a “peacekeeping” force insults our intelli-

gence. Our soldiers are trained warriors, not peacekeepers. If the peace agreement is so tenuous that it requires 60,000 NATO troops to enforce it, it cannot be much of a peace accord. If we want to send a peacekeeping force, we should send 20,000 hippies (do we still have them?), not fighting men.

As a veteran, I loathe the comparison to Vietnam’s civil conflict, in which communist intervention made it impossible for a people to control their own destiny. Finally, to have these men sacrificed by a president who was a coward when called by his country makes me sick to my stomach. What kind of swill will Clinton hand the families who will mourn the deaths of the young men lost in this fiasco?

If you really want to be different, Dole, end this garbage — don’t encourage it.

JAMES K. HAHN
Hutchinson