

48



# NEWS from U.S. Senator Bob Dole

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DOLE: PANAMA DRUG QUESTIONS  
MUST BE ANSWERED

Following is the text of a statement delivered on the Senate Floor today by Senator Bob Dole of Kansas:

"Mr. President, I am sure my colleagues are aware of my efforts during the past several months to find out the truth about allegations that the present government in Panama is involved in drug trafficking operations affecting the United States. On three previous occasions, I have made statements on the Senate Floor recounting my efforts to secure whatever evidence may be in the possession of the United States Drug Enforcement Administration. Those efforts continue.

"It is still my conviction that the Carter Administration owes the American people an honest and above-board explanation of the "Panama Connection" in international drug trafficking. The people of this country are being asked to accept much on faith, insofar as Panamanian guarantees under the Canal Treaties are concerned. They are being asked to trust the credibility and the integrity of Panama's leaders. They are being asked to consent to higher annual toll payments to Panama, which will surely strengthen the political and economic position of the Torrijos regime.

"Since the American people, and the Senate, are being asked to support these propositions, it is only reasonable that they expect answers to the drug-related questions that have been raised. I will continue to ask the Carter Administration to tell the full story. Failing that, I believe it may be appropriate for the Senate to go into closed session during the coming Canal Treaty debate, so that there may be full disclosure and full discussion of the relevant fact.

SENATE CONSIDERATION

"I have no interest in prolonging Senate debate on the Treaties unnecessarily, or in dragging irrelevant topics into the Treaty issue. But the drug question -- and I emphasize the word "question" -- is a tangential matter that should be discussed and resolved in our own minds early in this debate.

"Apparently, the Senate leadership and members of the Select Committee on Intelligence have already been briefed on the matter by Attorney General Griffin Bell and by Drug Enforcement Administrator Peter Bensinger. Perhaps their concerns have been resolved after having access to the full story. But others have questions. I have questions. I know many of my colleagues have questions. The American people have questions, and they deserve an answer.

"I would hope the Senate leadership would take the initiative to call for an early Senate discussion of this matter, behind closed doors if necessary, so that the questions can be put to rest. Given the leadership's familiarity with the material, I would hope they will take the lead in advising the rest of us.

"But if necessary, I am prepared to offer a motion for a closed session. If that is what is required to assure that the entire Senate has an opportunity to learn the facts, and to consider their relevance to the Treaties, then I am prepared to propose it at an early point in the debate.

"The drug charges deserve to be explored and explained, to the satisfaction of all members of this body, and I will not consent to drop the issue simply because of personal assurances that might be given to me as an individual.

COMMITTEE RESTRICTIONS

"I have been asked on several occasions why I do not exercise my privilege, as a United States Senator, to review confidential files on this subject which are in the