



NEWS from U.S. Senator Bob Dole

(R.—Kans.)

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DOLE: SECRET SESSION HELPED RESOLVE DRUG QUESTIONS

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- Senator Bob Dole said today that the twelve hours the Senate spent in Closed Session to discuss drug trafficking allegations about Panamanian officials was "useful, informative, and entirely worthwhile." During the 1-1/2 day secret session, Senator Dole raised a number of specific questions about allegations that the Panamanian General Omar Torrijos, his family, and high-ranking members of the Panamanian government engaged in illegal drug operations. The Senate Intelligence Committee, which has access to confidential United States government files on the matter, responded to questions raised by Senator Dole and others.

"Anytime the Senate investigates and discusses questions that concern a large number of the American people, it is no waste of time," Dole stated. "In fact, it was clear that there was a great deal of interest among the Senators themselves. At one point, more than 70 of my colleagues were in attendance. The subject of illegal activities by Panamanian leaders was certainly relevant to the Panama Canal Treaty issue, as it goes to the very heart of the question about their integrity, credibility, and reliability with respect to Treaty commitments. I don't know that any minds were changed one way or the other, but some of my 'undecided' colleagues on the Treaty issue were paying a good deal of attention," Dole said.

Senator Dole said that he felt the members of the Intelligence Committee did their best to answer all of his questions. "Obviously, there are some allegations which simply cannot be either proved or disproved. The Committee admitted as much. Some of my concerns were put to rest. There were also some loose ends left hanging, but the important thing is that this relevant issue was explored and discussed. Once the declassified transcript is available to the public, each individual can decide for himself whether the evidence of drug trafficking, and of toleration and protection of those operations, disqualifies the Panamanian government as a guarantor of the Canal Treaty commitments."