



NEWS from

U.S. Senator Bob Dole

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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May 15, 1978

SENATOR DOLE SUPPORTS DISAPPROVAL OF MIDDLE EAST ARMS SALE PACKAGE

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- Sen. Bob Dole (R-Kan.) today voted to reject President Carter's proposed Middle East arms sale package, urging that the decision be postponed until a peace settlement in the area is achieved.

In a statement on the Senate floor, Sen. Dole said, "At a time when negotiations between Israel and Egypt have reached an impasse, it seems to this senator that our government's primary attention and efforts should be directed first at reviving those negotiations, and at renewing efforts to achieve a comprehensive peace settlement in the Middle East. We should be reiterating our basic policy commitment to the survival of Israel, and to the resolution of territorial and boundary disputes among the nations in the region.

"To a large degree, this is a matter of principle. It is a question of whether the United States will back up its commitment to nurture the cause of peace as the first priority in the Middle East. As a matter of principle, that consideration should override secondary issues, such as differences of opinion about Saudi Arabian defense needs, questions about the air-to-ground capabilities of the F-15, or prospects for Arab arms purchases elsewhere."

Sen. Dole indicated that if the resolution of disapproval was defeated, he would offer a separate Senate resolution "expressing the 'sense' of this body that the President should postpone the actual issuance of the letters of offer until a comprehensive peace settlement has been reached in the Middle East."

Following is the text of Sen. Dole's floor remarks:

Mr. Dole. Mr. President, a little more than two weeks ago, the President formally submitted to Congress his notification of proposed fighter aircraft sales to Israel, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia. At the time, the Senator from Kansas expressed his opinion that the proposals were poorly timed, poorly presented, and that the "package" concept tying all three sales together was unacceptable. Also at that time, I suggested that "our attention and energies should remain focused on achievement of a responsible Middle East settlement as the first priority and arms sales might best be postponed until that goal has been reached." This Senator remains committed to that point of view, and it appears that more and more of us share that opinion.

Only nine weeks ago, a nationwide Gallup Poll Survey indicated overwhelming popular opposition to Middle East arms sales at this time. Fifty-four percent of those surveyed were opposed to providing arms or materials to Israel, compared to twenty-eight percent in favor. By the same token, sixty-eight percent opposed U.S. arms or material to the Arabs, against fifteen percent in favor. An even half of our colleagues on the Foreign Relations Committee, who have had the opportunity to study the issue in great depth, voted against the President's sales proposals last Thursday. So I think there is ample evidence of disagreement with the concept of pouring billions of dollars of weapons into the region at present.

From the beginning, President Carter's arms proposal has reflected the misplaced priorities of this Administration with respect to conditions in the Middle East. At a time when negotiations between Israel and Egypt have reached an impasse, it seems to this Senator that our government's primary attention and efforts should be directed first at reviving those negotiations, and at renewing efforts to achieve a comprehensive peace settlement in the Middle East. We should be reiterating our basic policy commitment to the survival of Israel, and to the Resolution of territorial and boundary disputes among the nations in the region.

To a large degree, this is a matter of principle. It is a question of whether the United States will back up its commitment to nurture the cause of peace as the first priority in the Middle East. As a matter of principle, that consideration should over-ride secondary issues, such as differences of opinion about Saudi Arabian defense needs, questions about the air-to-ground capabilities of the F-15, or prospects for Arab arms purchases elsewhere.

ARMS SALES SHOULD BE POSTPONED

For this reason, the Senator from Kansas believes that all four arms sales proposals should be rejected at this time, and held in abeyance until a peace settlement is reached between Israel and her neighbors. This is not to say that the proposals are totally unacceptable on their face. Nor does it imply that they should automatically be approved once a peace accord is reached. That is not the point.

The objective is to enhance and promote the achievement of a just and lasting peace settlement for all nations in the Middle East. President Carter should not ignore the opportunity to move towards that objective during this period, which I feel is particularly well-suited to our positive initiatives for peace.

The so-called "compromise" seems to many of us to be little more than a desperate last-minute effort to salvage a poorly composed proposal. The offer to sell Israel an additional twenty F-15 fighters, to "balance" sales to Saudi Arabia, is a remarkably superficial and overly simplistic solution to a complicated issue. It attempts to evade the real issues involved in the arms proposals.

Try as it might, the Administration has not been able to overcome arguments against pouring the world's most sophisticated fighter weapons into such a volatile situation.

Instead of positive reasons for providing these large volumes of weapons at this time, the Administration has deluged Congress and the public with negative arguments -- dire predictions of developments if arms proposals are rejected. We are told there may be sanctions against our oil supplies. We are told our prestige in the Middle East may decline. We are told the Saudis may turn to France for fighter aircraft. This does not seem to be an effective way

to promote a program. We simply should not throw billions of dollars of deadly weapons into an unstable area on the basis of questionable fears about what could happen if we don't do it.

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With regard to the issue of security for Saudi Arabia and its valuable oil fields, the key question is not whether the United States will agree to provide jet fighters, but whether the United States will stand up to Soviet aggression in Africa and the Middle East. The Saudi Foreign Minister noted in a recent interview that the major point of his country's concern is whether the Soviet policy of massive intervention in Africa will go unchallenged.

The Senator from Kansas suggests that the United States could have done far more to enhance regional security and to ease Saudi concerns if the Administration had shown a little more backbone during recent Soviet and Cuban aggression in Ethiopia. That strategically located country lies just across the Red Sea from Saudi Arabia. In conjunction with growing Soviet influence in South Yemen and Afghanistan, the Ethiopian conflict has naturally contributed to a growing sense of encirclement by the Saudi Arabian government.

Therefore, if friction develops between the United States and Saudi Arabia our matters relating to Saudi security, it will more likely be a result of our Administration's poor response to expanding communist threats in Africa, rather than a result of our decision not to provide 60 aircraft at this particular time - aircraft which the Saudis can easily obtain elsewhere.

WILL OFFER RESOLUTION

Under the provisions of the 1976 International Security Assistance and Arms Export Control Act, which governs the proposed sales, it is not possible to amend or recommit the resolution of disapproval now before us. Thus, we must decide now whether to disapprove the proposals, or else to stand aside and allow the President to go forward with his plans to provide the aircraft.

However, in view of the unstable situation in the Middle East region, and the continuing potential for an outbreak of hostilities, I believe it is imperative that the actual transactions be delayed until a more propitious time. Consequently, if the resolution of disapproval is defeated this afternoon, I shall offer a separate Senate Resolution, expressing the "sense" of this body that the President should postpone the actual issuance of the letters of offer until a comprehensive peace settlement has been reached in the Middle East.

This, at least, would give the Senate an opportunity to go on Record as opposed to any immediate delivery of weapons, and would conceivably help promote an early peace accord among these three nations, as well as other governments they may be able to influence.

Following is the text of the proposed Resolution; expressing the sense of the Senate with respect to the proposed sales of aircraft to certain countries in the Middle East.

Whereas, peace negotiations between Israel and Egypt, which were initiated in January of 1978, have been suspended;

Whereas, disagreements over territorial boundaries, settlements, and provisions for refugees in the Middle East region continue;

Whereas, the potential for an outbreak of hostilities in the Middle East remains a viable threat;
Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That it is the sense of the Senate that the President should delay the issuance of any letter of offer to Israel, Egypt, or Saudi Arabia for the proposed sale of aircraft described in transmittal notices submitted to the Congress on April 28, 1978 (numbered 78-32, 78-33, 78-34, and 78-35), notwithstanding the failure of the Congress to object to such proposed sale pursuant to section 36(b) of the Arms Export Control Act, until after a comprehensive agreement has been reached establishing peace in the Middle East.

Sec. 2. The Secretary of the Senate shall transmit a copy of this resolution to the President.