

News from Senator

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U.S. NOT READY TO HAVE BLUFF CALLED ON PERSIAN GULF, DOLE SAYS

WASHINGTON -- Senator Bob Dole (R-Kan.) said today that, despite assurances from U.S. envoy Clark Clifford that we would go to war if the Soviet Union moves toward the Persian Gulf, the Carter Administration is not in a position to guarantee that U.S. forces can rebuff a Soviet thrust into the Gulf region.

"I am not an expert on gambling, but it seems to me that Americans should be wondering, 'What do you do in a high stakes poker game when you're only holding deuces and your opponent decides to call your bluff?'" Dole said. "It looks as if the United States is pretty close to that position now.

"The Administration is engaged in a series of calculated blustering aimed at threatening the Soviet Union. Yesterday, President Carter's secretary of defense, testifying before members of Congress, implied that the outcome of any war we would fight in the Persian Gulf would be highly doubtful, and that our position is so precarious that even to talk about whether we could win is very dangerous and harmful to our chances. Yet if this is true, why does the Administration persist in these threats?

"In his State of the Union address last week, President Carter announced that we will take bold military moves to curb any Soviet advances in the Persian Gulf region. In fact we cannot or will not do so.

"There are many questions that remain unanswered in the aftermath of the President's speech. Does anyone really think that by re-instating registration, a process that will take over six months, we can deter Soviet aggression? Or by suddenly revamping or removing congressional checks on the CIA that we can prevent future Afghanistans?

"The President promised to protect by military force the 'Persian Gulf region.' But what countries or areas are specifically included in that region? Can we rely on our allies for help?

"These questions will not be answered by our proposed defense budget. Secretary Brown's budget was formulated before the President's turnabout realization of the Soviets' aggressive intentions around the globe. There are no new programs, no increases in spending in order to get shorter lead times in delivery of manpower. What specific actions show the United States is taking steps to commit its will and power to back its strategic interests? We have embargoed our farmers' grain so that Argentina could sell theirs to the Soviets. And we have talked about the possibility of going to war.

"I fear that the Soviet Union will disregard Clark Clifford's warning. They see the President's State of the Union message as little more than an attempt at intimidating propaganda. This may be incorrect, but such miscalculations can lead to dangerous confrontations and unintentioned wars."