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DOLE CALLS FOR ADMINISTRATION, INTERNATIONAL RESPONSES TO SOVIET CHEMICAL WARFARE

WASHINGTON -- Senator Bob Dole (R-Kan.) today called on the Carter Administration to "analyze the facts and publicly recognize that we have a serious problem" in structuring an adequate defense against Soviet use of biological and chemical weapons in Afghanistan.

Dole, who has repeatedly spoken out against the widespread use of these weapons to murder hundreds of Afghans, re-iterated his call for the Geneva Conference to seriously address this problem.

In a statement on the Senate floor, Dole said, "I have repeatedly called upon the State Department and the Administration to direct the U.N. Committee on Disarmament to begin an investigation of the Soviet role in Afghanistan with regard to chemical warfare. Unfortunately, in the wake of new developments in Iran, there has yet to be a serious attempt made by either the State Department or the Administration to address the implications of this international crime.

"I suppose the old cliché 'Out of sight, out of mind' too often rings true. But it is my feeling that these blasphemies against humanity may not be out of sight for long if we continue to allow the suspected use of chemical and perhaps even biological warfare by the Soviets to continue unquestioned.

"Within the past year, over 1,000 have died mysteriously and quickly at Sverdlovsk. There has yet to be a satisfactory explanation of the deadly anthrax spores which caused the mass epidemic. When over 1,000 citizens die within hours in one city, it becomes increasingly difficult to deny that biological research is being done. And when a government refuses to explain this ghastly occurrence to expectant conference members in Geneva, it becomes a deadly risk to continue to trust that government in critical negotiations.

"Vice President Mondale has publicly conceded the Soviets' use of 'lethal gas.' Yet, the Administration has conducted its diplomatic relations in a business-as-usual fashion that some in the press have even gone so far as to suggest amounts to trying to 'cover up Soviet germ warfare capability.'

"If Geneva is to be the site and occasion for communicating and negotiating on biological and chemical warfare, it seems that one of the basic goals of the conference should be to utilize that opportunity to ask some simple and direct questions on the way in which chemicals are being used and the extent to which they are being developed in participating countries. The inability and/or unwillingness of the Soviet Union to answer these questions makes the conference a farce and the questions a waste of time.

"The Geneva Conference is one of the few active communication conduits between the West and the Kremlin since the invasion of Afghanistan. That, in itself, might seem enough to ensure its continued viability and stature despite the costs. It is American policy to maintain the framework of U.S.-U.S.S.R. negotiations intact. However, a closer examination of this relationship reveals that we're building our future on shaky ground.

"I don't suggest or condone a U.S. response in the form of development of our own chemical arsenals. But there is an appropriate and needed response which should be employed immediately. Once again, I call upon the Administration and the State Department to analyze the facts and publicly recognize that we have a serious problem. Only then can we begin to structure an adequate defense against biological and chemical weapons. A failure to react may be more fatal to America than the nuclear arms race that has received so much more attention and which we have feared for so long."