

News from Senator

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STATEMENT OF SENATE MAJORITY LEADER BOB DOLE

ARMS CONTROL

THE REAGAN STRATEGY

FOR FIVE AND A HALF YEARS, SOME PEOPLE AROUND THIS TOWN HAVE MADE A CAREER OF TRYING TO ATTACK RONALD REAGAN ON ARMS CONTROL ISSUES.

WHEN THE PRESIDENT TOOK OFFICE AND SPOKE THE HARD TRUTH ABOUT THE NATURE OF THE SOVIET UNION AND THE MILITARY THREAT IT REPRESENTED, THESE CRITICS CRIED OUT THAT RONALD REAGAN COULD NEVER NEGOTIATE WITH THE SOVIETS BECAUSE HIS RHETORIC WAS TOO POINTED -- IT WOULD OFFEND THE POOR SOULS IN THE KREMLIN.

THEN, WHEN WE BEGAN A LONG-OVERDUE CAMPAIGN TO CATCH UP WITH THE SOVIETS IN MILITARY CAPABILITIES -- ESPECIALLY IN THE STRATEGIC WEAPONS AREA -- WE WERE TOLD THAT SUCH A "MILITARY BUILD-UP" SPELLED DOOM FOR ARMS CONTROL.

THEN THE PRESIDENT ANNOUNCED HIS STRATEGIC DEFENSE INITIATIVE -- WHICH THE CRITICS GLEEFULLY TAGGED "STAR WARS" -- AND THE NAY-SAYERS LABELLED IT THE "DEATH KNEEL" FOR ARMS CONTROL.

AND FINALLY, JUST SEVERAL MONTHS AGO, THE PRESIDENT DECIDED THE U.S. -- IN THE FACE OF MASSIVE SOVIET VIOLATIONS -- WAS ABANDONING ITS UNILATERAL COMMITMENT TO THE UNRATIFIED SALT II TREATY. AND THAT DECISION BECAME THE LATEST "DEATH SENTENCE" FOR ARMS CONTROL.

THE SOVIETS UNDERSTAND

WELL, SOME PEOPLE MIGHT HAVE BOUGHT THOSE CHARGES AND ARGUMENTS, BUT FORTUNATELY FOR US ALL AT LEAST ONE GROUP DIDN'T -- THE LEADERS OF THE SOVIET UNION. THEY UNDERSTOOD WHAT RONALD REAGAN'S STRATEGY WAS REALLY ABOUT. THEY UNDERSTOOD THAT OUR PRESIDENT WAS GOING TO DO WHATEVER WAS

NECESSARY TO INSURE OUR NATIONAL DEFENSE. THEY UNDERSTOOD THAT PLANS TO ACHIEVE THEIR GOALS THROUGH NAKED THREATS AND BULLYING WERE NOT GOING TO SUCCEED DURING A REAGAN PRESIDENCY. AND THEY ALSO UNDERSTOOD -- AND LAST NOVEMBER'S SUMMIT WAS PROBABLY THE OCCASION WHEN THIS MESSAGE REALLY GOT THROUGH -- THAT RONALD REAGAN WAS SERIOUSLY INTERESTED IN REAL ARMS CONTROL. THE KIND THAT COULD ENHANCE, NOT ENDANGER, OUR NATIONAL SECURITY. THE KIND THAT COULD MAKE THE WORLD TRULY SAFER AND MORE SECURE.

AND SO -- CONFOUNDING THE DIRE PREDICTIONS OF THE CRITICS -- THE SOVIETS RETURNED TO THE GENEVA TALKS THEY HAD EARLIER ABANDONED. THEY SLOWLY BUT SURELY GOT AROUND TO NEGOTIATING, EVEN AS SDI RESEARCH WENT FORWARD. AND, FINALLY, THEY TABLED WHAT APPEARS TO BE A SERIOUS PROPOSAL WHICH MAY OFFER SOME HOPE FOR REAL PROGRESS IN ARMS REDUCTIONS.

WHITE HOUSE ANNOUNCEMENT

THE WHITE HOUSE ANNOUNCEMENT THIS MORNING THAT WE HAVE FORMULATED THE ESSENTIALS OF OUR RESPONSE AND THAT WE HAVE BEGUN CONSULTATIONS WITH OUR ALLIES DEMONSTRATES AGAIN THAT THE PRESIDENT IS NOT GOING TO LET THIS OPPORTUNITY TO MAKE PROGRESS GET AWAY. THE WHITE HOUSE INDICATED WE WILL PROBABLY HAVE OUR REPLY TO GORBACHEV BY THE END OF THE MONTH -- THAT, HOPEFULLY, WILL OPEN THE DOOR TO A MEETING BETWEEN SECRETARY SHULTZ AND SOVIET FOREIGN MINISTER SHEVARNADZE WHICH, IN TURN, WOULD WORK OUT DETAILS FOR A SUMMIT THIS YEAR.

THESE ARE ONLY THE INITIAL STEPS. WE DON'T YET KNOW WHERE THIS ROAD WILL LEAD. ABOVE ALL, WE DON'T YET KNOW WHETHER THE SOVIETS ARE REALLY SERIOUS ABOUT WANTING SUBSTANTIAL, VERIFIABLE ARMS REDUCTIONS. BUT WE DO HAVE SOME REASON TO HOPE.

WE HAVE THIS HOPE. NOT IN SPITE OF, BUT BECAUSE OF RONALD REAGAN. WE HAVE THIS HOPE, NOT IN SPITE OF, BUT BECAUSE WE HAD THE SENSE TO SUPPORT THE PRESIDENT'S PROGRAMS FOR THE MX, SDI AND ALL THE REST. WE HAVE THIS HOPE, NOT IN SPITE OF, BUT BECAUSE WE HAVE WISELY ABANDONED THE PHONY CONSTRAINTS OF SALT II AND SAID THAT -- ABSENT SOME NEW, REAL ARMS REDUCTION AGREEMENT -- WE WILL DO WHATEVER IS NECESSARY TO INSURE OUR NATIONAL DEFENSE.

DESPITE WHAT HAS HAPPENED, I DON'T REALLY EXPECT THAT THE PRESIDENT'S KNEE-JERK CRITICS ARE GOING TO ADMIT THEY WERE WRONG. THEY'RE GOING TO CONTINUE TO FORGET HISTORY, IGNORE THE FACTS AND PREDICT THE WORST. MY HOPE IS THAT -- AS THEY CONTINUE THEIR MINDLESS DIATRIBES -- THE REST OF US CAN MOVE FORWARD, WITH THE PRESIDENT, TO A FUTURE WHERE OUR COUNTRY WILL BE STRONG AND SECURE AND THE WORLD WILL NOT HAVE TO LIVE UNDER THE CONSTANT THREAT OF NUCLEAR ANNIHILATION.