

News from Senator

BOB DOLE



(R - Kansas)

SH 141 Hart Building, Washington, D.C. 20510

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CONTACT: WALT RIKER,
DALE TATE (202) 224-3135

REMARKS OF SENATE MAJORITY LEADER BOB DOLE CONTRA AID -- THE TIME TO ACT IS NOW

YESTERDAY, FINALLY, WE BEGAN WORK ON THE MILITARY CONSTRUCTION APPROPRIATIONS BILL, INCLUDING ITS IMPORTANT PROVISIONS ON AID FOR THE DEMOCRATIC RESISTANCE IN NICARAGUA, THE SO-CALLED CONTRAS, OR "FREEDOM FIGHTERS".

IT'S ABOUT TIME THAT WE'VE REACHED THE POINT WHEN WE CAN PUT THE CONTRA AID PROGRAM INTO LAW AND INTO EFFECT. WE HAVE ALREADY DEBATED THIS ISSUE MANY TIMES, FOR MANY, MANY HOURS. THE SENATE IS ALREADY ON RECORD IN SUPPORT OF THE PROGRAM -- EARLIER THIS YEAR, IN A BIPARTISAN VOTE OF 53-47, THE SENATE APPROVED AN AID-FOR-THE-CONTRAS PACKAGE SIMILAR TO THE ONE WE ARE CONSIDERING NOW.

YET WE STILL DELAY. FIRST, THE HOUSE LEADERSHIP STALLED AND STALLED. AND, WHEN IT FINALLY DID ACT, OPPONENTS OF THE PROGRAM IN THE SENATE DRAGGED THEIR FEET, THREATENING A FILIBUSTER AND REFUSING TO CONSENT TO AN AGREEMENT THAT WOULD ALLOW THE SENATE TO WORK ITS WILL.

PAST DELAYS COSTLY

WHILE WE HAVE FINALLY WORKED OUT AN AGREEMENT THAT WILL PERMIT US TO ACT, THESE UNWARRANTED DELAYS HAVE ALREADY BEEN AT GREAT COST.

WHILE WE TALKED, THE SANDINISTA REGIME -- AND ITS ALLIES IN MOSCOW AND HAVANA -- ACTED. NICARAGUA INVADDED HONDURAS; CONTINUED ITS SUPPORT FOR VICIOUS INSURGENCIES IN THE NEIGHBORING DEMOCRACIES; RECEIVED NEW, THREATENING WEAPONS SYSTEMS FROM THE SOVIET UNION; AND SCUTTLED THE LAST, AND MOST PROMISING, ROUND OF CONTADORA TALKS. THE SANDINISTAS ALSO ACCELERATED THEIR DETERMINED CRACKDOWN ON FREEDOM AT HOME, TIGHTENING THE SCREWS OF THEIR STATE OF EMERGENCY; CLOSING THE LAST VOICE OF JOURNALISTIC

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OPPOSITION, LA PRENSA; AND USING THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AS A PUNCHING BAG, BOOTING BISHOP VEGA OUT OF THE COUNTRY DESPITE THE PROTEST OF POPE JOHN.

WELL, WE'VE JUST ABOUT RUN OUT OF TIME. THE SANDINISTAS ARE ALREADY FIRMLY IN MOSCOW'S POCKET. THEIR MILITARY MACHINE, BY FAR THE REGION'S LARGEST, IS ALREADY IN A POSITION TO DOMINATE CENTRAL AMERICA. THE SANDINSTA REGIME HAS ALREADY TIGHTENED THE NOOSE AROUND THE PEOPLE OF NICARAGUA.

WE HAVE TO RESPOND, BEFORE IT IS TOO LATE.

AID FOR CONTRAS PART OF BROADER STRATEGY

NOW LET ME BE CLEAR. AID FOR THE CONTRAS IS NOT THE ENTIRE ANSWER TO THESE SANDINISTA POLICIES. CONTRA AID BY ITSELF IS NOT GOING TO TURN THE MANAGUA REGIME AROUND. WE NEED TO CONTINUE AND EXPAND OUR SUPPORT FOR THE DEMOCRACIES OF CENTRAL AMERICA, TO HELP THEM DEFEND THEMSELVES AGAINST THE SANDINISTA THREAT. PROVISIONS FOR INCREASED AID ARE INCLUDED IN THIS BILL. WE NEED TO WORK CLOSELY WITH OUR ALLIES AND FRIENDS, BOTH IN THE REGION AND AROUND THE WORLD, TO KEEP UP THE POLITICAL AND DIPLOMATIC PRESSURE ON MANAGUA. WE NEED TO PURSUE EVERY REASONABLE CHANNEL FOR NEGOTIATIONS, WHETHER IT BE THE CONTADORA PROCESS, THE OAS OR WHATEVER. WE WANT A NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT. EVEN MORE IMPORTANT, WE KNOW THAT NO OTHER KIND OF SETTLEMENT IS REALISTICALLY POSSIBLE IN THE FORSEEABLE FUTURE.

THE PROBLEM, THOUGH, IS TWO FOLD. FIRST, THE SANDINSTAS HAVE GOALS WHICH THEY KNOW ARE NOT LIKELY TO BE ACHIEVED THROUGH A FAIR, NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT -- GOALS SUCH AS CEMENTING THEIR ALLIANCE WITH THE SOVIET UNION AND CUBA; BECOMING THE DOMINANT MILITARY POWER IN CENTRAL AMERICA; INTIMIDATING THEIR NEIGHBORS INTO POLITICAL SILENCE; ESTABLISHING A TOTALITARIAN, ONE-PARTY STATE AT HOME. THOSE GOALS ARE INCONSISTENT WITH THE GOALS OF THE OTHER PARTIES TO A REAL NEGOTIATION -- THE UNITED STATES AND THE OTHER GOVERNMENTS OF CENTRAL AMERICA. THE SANDINISTAS KNOW THAT, AND THEY ARE NOT GOING TO NEGOTIATE SERIOUSLY UNLESS THEY HAVE TO.

SECOND, THE SANDINISTAS HAVEN'T YET BEEN CONVINCED THAT THEY MUST NEGOTIATE SERIOUSLY. THEY HAVEN'T YET SEEN THAT A NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT IS THE ONLY WAY OUT FOR THEM, TOO. THEY REMAIN CONVINCED THAT THEY CAN WIN, OUTRIGHT, WITHOUT NEGOTIATIONS OR CONCESSIONS. AND, LOOKING AT OUR SORRY RECORD OF ACTION -- OR I GUESS I SHOULD SAY, INACTION -- ON CONTRA AID, I'M NOT VERY SURPRISED THAT THEY FEEL THAT WAY. FOR UNDERSTANDABLE REASON, THEY HAVE CONCLUDED THAT WE WILL BE TOO DIVIDED, TOO INDECISIVE, TOO PREOCCUPIED, TOO AFRAID, TO REALLY STAND IN THEIR WAY, IN THE LONG RUN.

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AND THEY WILL CONTINUE TO FEEL THAT WAY UNTIL WE SHOW -- BY OUR ACTIONS, AS WELL AS BY OUR WORDS -- THAT WE'RE NOT GOING TO LET THEM GET AWAY WITH IT; THAT WE'RE NOT GOING TO STAND IDLY BY WHILE OUR SECURITY INTERESTS AND ALLIES IN CENTRAL AMERICA GO DOWN THE DRAIN AND WHILE THE PEOPLE OF NICARAGUA SINK INTO THE MIRE OF MARXIST OPPRESSION.

AID TO CONTRAS POWERFUL MESSAGE TO MANAGUA

THAT IS WHERE AID FOR THE CONTRAS FITS IN. IT IS NOT A STRATEGY IN ITSELF, BUT IT IS AN ESSENTIAL -- AND LET ME STRESS THAT WORD, BECAUSE IT IS LITERALLY TRUE -- IT IS AN ESSENTIAL PART OF ANY STRATEGY TO ACHIEVE A FAIR, NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT. WITHOUT SOME TRULY STRONG OUTSIDE PRESSURE, THE SANDINISTAS JUST AREN'T GOING TO NEGOTIATE SERIOUSLY. WITHOUT THE CONTRAS, ANY OTHER PRESSURES WE CAN REALISTICALLY BRING TO BEAR JUST AREN'T GOING TO DO THE JOB.

AID FOR THE CONTRAS, THOUGH, CAN SEND A VERY POWERFUL MESSAGE TO MANAGUA -- THAT WE ARE PREPARED TO STAND UP FOR OUR INTERESTS AND OUR FRIENDS; THAT WE ARE PREPARED TO HELP THOSE WHO SHARE OUR GOALS AND WHO ARE STRUGGLING FOR THEIR OWN FREEDOM; THAT WE ARE NOT PREPARED TO GIVE THE SANDINISTA REGIME A CLEAR FIELD TO DO WHAT IT WANTS, WHEN IT WANTS, TO WHOMEVER IT WANTS.

ONLY IF THAT KIND OF MESSAGE SINKS IN WITH ORTEGA AND HIS CROWD CAN WE EVER HAVE THE KIND OF NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT THAT WE ALL WANT.

TIME FOR SENATE TO ACT

THE OPPONENTS OF THE FREEDOM FIGHTERS ON CAPITOL HILL HAVE STONEWALLED, DILLY-DALLIED AND DELAYED: BUT THE GAME IS OVER AND NOW IT'S TIME TO ACT. UNLESS WE DO, IT MAY BE TOO LATE. TOO LATE FOR THE CONTRAS. TOO LATE FOR THE PEOPLE OF NICARAGUA. TOO LATE FOR THE DEMOCRACIES OF CENTRAL AMERICA. AND TOO LATE TO AVOID ANOTHER, MORE AGONIZING SET OF DECISIONS SOMEWHERE DOWN THE ROAD.

LET US GET ON WITH OUR WORK, MEET OUR RESPONSIBILITY AND DO WHAT MUST BE DONE.

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