

News from Senator

BOB DOLE



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STATEMENT OF SENATOR BOB DOLE CONTRA AID PACKAGE

I SUPPORT THIS PACKAGE OF HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE TO THE NICARAGUAN FREEDOM FIGHTERS, BUT WITH DECIDEDLY MIXED EMOTIONS.

IT IS SAD, AND DANGEROUS TO AMERICAN SECURITY INTERESTS AND THE CAUSE OF FREEDOM IN NICARAGUA, THAT THIS IS THE BEST WE CAN DO. BUT -- SAD THOUGH IT IS -- THIS IS THE BEST WE CAN DO. IT WOULD BE IRRESPONSIBLE AND A BREAK IN FAITH WITH THE FREEDOM FIGHTERS THEMSELVES TO DEFEAT OR DELAY THIS PACKAGE, SIMPLY WASHING OUR HANDS OF THE WHOLE AFFAIR.

I HOPE THAT THOSE WHO BELIEVE THIS PACKAGE OFFERS THE BEST CHANCE TO BRING BOTH PEACE AND DEMOCRACY TO CENTRAL AMERICA ARE RIGHT. BUT I CAN'T SAY THAT I HAVE ANY GREAT CONFIDENCE THEY ARE RIGHT.

COMMUNIST LEOPARDS DO NOT CHANGE THEIR SPOTS. I BELIEVE AS STRONGLY AS I CAN STATE IT THAT DANIEL ORTEGA AND HIS SANDINISTA SUPPORTERS ARE PROCEEDING ON A LONG-TERM STRATEGY AIMED AT THE TOTAL CONSOLIDATION OF A COMMUNIST STATE IN NICARAGUA; AND THAT THEY SEE THEIR CURRENT NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE CONTRAS, THE CEASEFIRE AGREEMENT AND THEIR OTHER DIPLOMATIC AND POLITICAL ACTIVITIES AS PART OF THAT LONG TERM STRATEGY -- NOT AS A GOOD FAITH EFFORT TO SET THE GROUNDWORK FOR DEMOCRATIZATION OF NICARAGUA.

IT MAY BE THAT A SMALL OPENING TOWARD DEMOCRATIZATION COULD UNLEASH SUCH A FEROCIOUS "TIGER" OF DEMOCRATIC FERMENT IN NICARAGUA THAT EVEN DANIEL ORTEGA COULDN'T PUT THAT TIGER BACK IN THE CAGE. THAT SEEMS TO BE THE LOGIC, AND THE HOPE, OF THOSE WHO HAVE CRAFTED THIS PACKAGE; AND, IN FACT, THE UNDERLYING LOGIC OF THE ARIAS PLAN.

BUT I HOPE ALL OF US WILL REMEMBER THAT THE SANDINISTAS HAVE ALL THE GUNS, OR CERTAINLY SOON WILL; AND WITH SUFFICIENT FIREPOWER, EVEN FEROCIOUS TIGERS CAN USUALLY BE TAMED, OR TURNED INTO TROPHIES.

I DON'T WANT TO SEE FREEDOM END UP AS A TROPHY ON THE WALLS OF DANIEL ORTEGA'S DEN.

I WISH WE COULD CONTINUE A POLICY WHICH HAS BEEN SUCCESSFUL; WHICH HAS PRESSURED ORTEGA TO THE TABLE; WHICH HAS AT LEAST KEPT OPEN THE POSSIBILITY THAT OUR VERY REAL AND IMPORTANT SECURITY INTERESTS IN THE REGION CAN BE ADDRESSED. I WISH WE COULD CONTINUE TO PROVIDE MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO THE CONTRAS AT LEAST UNTIL WE HAVE REALLY SOLID GUARANTEES IN PLACE THAT THAT DEMOCRATIZATION COULD GO FORWARD AND OUR SECURITY INTERESTS WOULD BE ADDRESSED. I WISH AS A MINIMUM THAT WE COULD HAVE A GUARANTEED VOTE ON MILITARY AID IF THE CEASEFIRE TALKS, AND THE OTHER POLITICAL NEGOTIATIONS BREAK DOWN, OR IF THE SANDINISTAS TURN THEIR BACKS ON THEIR OWN COMMITMENTS -- AS THEY HAVE SO OFTEN BEFORE.

I WISH WE COULD HAVE LEGISLATION COVERING ALL THOSE THINGS. BUT -- AS I SAID RECENTLY IN ANOTHER CONTEXT -- I CAN COUNT. I KNOW WE CAN'T GET THAT KIND OF LEGISLATION.

SO I MUST ACCEPT WHAT WE DO HAVE. I DO IT WITH HOPE, BUT NOT WITH GREAT EXPECTATION. AND I DO IT WITH THIS PERSONAL COMMITMENT: THAT I HAVE NOT GIVEN UP ON THE FREEDOM FIGHTERS; I HAVE NOT GIVEN UP ON THE POLICY AND STRATEGY THAT I BELIEVE WAS WORKING; I HAVE NOT GIVEN UP ON DOING EVERYTHING I CAN TO SEE THAT BOTH PEACE AND FREEDOM CAN BE RESTORED TO NICARAGUA.