

Bob Dole



NEWS

U. S. SENATOR FOR KANSAS

FROM:

SENATE REPUBLICAN LEADER

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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POW/MIA HEARINGS

**DOLE TESTIFIES: EASY TO POINT FINGERS WHILE REWRITING HISTORY;
DEFEATED 1973 DOLE AMENDMENT GAVE SENATE GOLDEN OPPORTUNITY
TO IMPOSE TOUGH LEVERAGE ON HANOI FOR FULL ACCOUNTING**

I APPRECIATE THE OPPORTUNITY TO APPEAR BEFORE YOU TODAY. I KNOW YOU HAVE A BUSY SCHEDULE, AND I WON'T TAKE UP A LOT OF YOUR TIME.

BUT, AS THE COMMITTEE KNOWS, I HAVE BEEN ENGAGED WITH THIS ISSUE FOR A LONG, LONG TIME. I CAN RECALL VIVIDLY MY FIRST MEETING WITH POW/MIA FAMILIES, IN THE ROTUNDA OF THE CAPITOL IN MARCH 1969. I BELIEVE WE HAD REPRESENTATIVES OF SOME 20-30 FAMILIES PRESENT.

I REMEMBER OUR NEXT MEETING, TWO MONTHS LATER -- THIS TIME IN CONSTITUTION HALL -- AND THIS TIME THE HALL WAS FILLED TO OVERFLOWING WITH THE FAMILIES AND FRIENDS OF THE POW/MIA'S. WE WERE STARTING A FIRE OF INTEREST AND DETERMINATION TO GET TO THE BOTTOM OF THIS ISSUE; A FIRE THAT BURNS JUST AS BRIGHTLY TODAY.

1973: THE DOLE-HELMS AMENDMENT

AND I REMEMBER, TOO, THE DEBATE AND VOTE ON THE SO-CALLED DOLE-HELMS AMENDMENT TO THE JUNE 1973 SUPPLEMENTAL APPROPRIATIONS BILL -- A MATTER THAT SENATOR BROWN HAS RECENTLY RAISED IN THIS COMMITTEE. AS THE COMMITTEE KNOWS, THAT AMENDMENT WOULD HAVE ALLOWED THE PRESIDENT TO WAIVE THE EXISTING RESTRICTION ON TAKING MILITARY ACTION AGAINST NORTH VIETNAM, IF HANOI WAS NOT COOPERATING ON RESOLVING THE ISSUE OF POW/MIA'S.

I KNOW, MR. CHAIRMAN, THAT YOU HAVE MADE CLEAR THAT YOU DO NOT WANT THIS COMMITTEE TO BE A FORUM FOR RE-FIGHTING THE WAR IN VIETNAM. YOU'RE ABSOLUTELY RIGHT, AND I COMMEND YOU FOR THAT.

IN FACT, THIS COMMITTEE HAS A CLEAR CHARTER FROM THE SENATE -- TO DO EVERYTHING POSSIBLE TO DETERMINE IF THERE MIGHT BE POW/MIA'S STILL ALIVE AND IMPRISONED IN VIETNAM, LAOS OR CAMBODIA. IT IS GOING ABOUT THAT WORK IN A DETERMINED WAY.

PLATFORM FOR FINGERPOINTING

BUT, WITHOUT SUGGESTING THAT IT IS THE INTENT OF THE COMMITTEE, IT IS CERTAINLY A FACT OF LIFE THAT THE MEDIA IS REPORTING YOUR WORK AS A KIND OF "WHO SHOT JOHN" EXERCISE. THE HEADLINES ARE ALL FULL OF FINGER-POINTING; ABOUT WHO, QUOTE, ABANDONED, UNQUOTE, OUR POW/MIA'S; ABOUT WHO IS TO BLAME FOR A SITUATION WHERE TOO LITTLE WAS DONE FOR TOO LONG IN TRYING TO FIND OUT THE TRUTH ABOUT THE FATE OF OUR POW/MIA'S.

IN THAT CONTEXT, SENATOR BROWN'S RECOLLECTION OF THAT TIME 20 YEARS AGO IS A HEALTHY REMINDER OF THE TRUE STATE OF OUR NATION AT THAT TIME; OF THE TRUE STATE OF OUR CONSIDERATION, BOTH IN THE SENATE AND IN THE NATION AT LARGE, OF THE POW/MIA ISSUE.

THE MEDIA OR INDIVIDUALS CAN MAKE ACCUSATIONS ABOUT PRESIDENT NIXON, OR SECRETARY KISSINGER, OR WHOEVER THEY WANT. AND THE SENATE CAN GIVE A PLATFORM TO THOSE WHO WANT TO MAKE THOSE ACCUSATIONS.

HOLDING THE SENATE ACCOUNTABLE

BUT LET'S FACE IT -- WHEN YOU LINE UP THE CULPRITS WHO GOT US TO WHERE WE ARE TODAY, THE SENATE ITSELF SHOULD ENJOY A PROMINENT PLACE AT THE FRONT OF THE LINE. WHEN YOU LINE UP THE CULPRITS WHO HAVE TO BE HELD ACCOUNTABLE FOR TWO DECADES OF ANGUISH THAT THE FAMILIES OF THE POW/MIA'S HAVE SUFFERED, THE SENATE ITSELF SHOULD ENJOY A PROMINENT PLACE AT THE FRONT OF THE LINE.

IT'S NOT TOO TOUGH TO SIT HERE, IN 1992, AND SAY PRESIDENT NIXON SHOULD HAVE DONE THIS, OR SECRETARY KISSINGER SHOULD HAVE DONE THAT ABOUT POW/MIA'S. BUT IT WAS THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES THAT STRIPPED THE PRESIDENT OF ANY SHRED OF LEVERAGE AS HE TRIED TO NEGOTIATE WITH THE VIETNAMESE COMMUNISTS. IT WAS THE SENATE THAT SENT OUT HENRY KISSINGER TO A GUNFIGHT AT THE O.K. CORRAL, BUT TOLD HIM -- AND THE WORLD -- HE COULD ONLY TAKE ALONG BLANKS.

1973: THE SENATE'S CHANCE TO IMPOSE TOUGH LEVERAGE

THE DOLE-HELMS AMENDMENT 20 YEARS AGO SAID EXACTLY WHAT THIS COMMITTEE, AND ALL SENSIBLE AMERICANS, ARE SAYING TODAY. THAT THIS COUNTRY, AS WE WOUND UP OUR INVOLVEMENT IN THE WARS IN INDOCHINA, SHOULD HAVE HAD NO GREATER PRIORITY THAN GETTING A FULL ACCOUNTING FOR EVERY SINGLE POW OR MIA. THE DOLE-HELMS AMENDMENT GAVE THE SENATE AN OPPORTUNITY TO SPEAK OUT LOUD AND CLEAR ON THAT POINT.

(MORE)

WELL, THE SENATE SPOKE OUT LOUD AND CLEAR. BUT ON THE WRONG SIDE OF THE ARGUMENT.

17 CURRENTLY SERVING SENATORS WERE AROUND TO VOTE ON THAT JUNE DAY IN 1973. FIVE OF US VOTED FOR THE AMENDMENT -- MYSELF; SENATOR HELMS, MY COSPONSOR; AND SENATORS DOMENICI, ROTH AND THURMOND. 12 SENATORS STILL SERVING TODAY VOTED AGAINST THE AMENDMENT.

I'M NOT SUGGESTING THAT ANY OF THEM VOTED WITH ANYTHING LESS THAN TOTAL SINCERITY AND TOTAL BELIEF THAT WHAT THEY WERE DOING WAS THE RIGHT THING. I'M NOT SUGGESTING THAT ANY ONE OF THEM HAD ANY LESS CONCERN ABOUT THE POW/MIA ISSUE THAT THE OTHER FIVE OF US.

REWRITING HISTORY

BUT I AM SUGGESTING THAT IT IS MIGHTY EASY TO SIT HERE IN 1992, FORGETTING OUR OWN HISTORY, WHILE CREATIVELY REWRITING THE HISTORY OF WHAT EVERYBODY ELSE DID AND THOUGHT BACK THEN.

IT IS MIGHTY EASY TO SIT HERE IN 1992 AND POINT FINGERS AT OTHER INDIVIDUALS -- CONVENIENTLY FORGETTING OUR OWN ACTIONS AND WORDS.

I WOULD ASK UNANIMOUS CONSENT TO PUT IN THE RECORD OF THIS HEARING THE FULL TEXT OF OUR DEBATE ON THE DOLE-HELMS AMENDMENT BACK IN 1973, IF THAT HAS NOT ALREADY BEEN DONE.

I WOULD JUST CONCLUDE BY READING JUST ONE BRIEF EXCERPT FROM MY OWN REMARKS ON THAT OCCASION, QUOTE:

"I AM UNDER NO ILLUSION. I DO NOT EXPECT THIS AMENDMENT ... TO PREVAIL. BUT I WOULD HOPE THOSE WHO READ THE RECORD AND THOSE WHO SIT DOWN NEXT YEAR OR 20 YEARS FROM NOW TO READ THE RECORD, IN THE EVENT THE NORTH VIETNAMESE DO NOT CARRY OUT THE AGREEMENT, WILL KNOW THERE WERE THOSE OF US IN THE SENATE WHO STOOD AND LET OUR VIEWS BE KNOWN."

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1973 DEBATE HIGHLIGHTS: REMARKS OF SENATOR DOLE:

Now, as a result in no small way of the Congress' earlier refusals to pass such legislation, we have been blessed with the return of more than 500 of our prisoners. We are all grateful for their return. As a Nation we rejoiced with the men and with their families at their homecoming.

But in the midst of our rejoicing we cannot ignore the fact that we still lack a full and satisfactory accounting of our missing in action.

IMPATIENCE AND WEARINESS

The country has long since grown weary of war. The country has long since tired of hearing news of American military involvement in Indochina, be it the ground combat of an earlier day or the air operations of today. And, of course, the Congress too, has grown weary of the conflict.

FIRM COMMITMENT TO GOALS

But if we allow our weariness of the war and our understandable and quite sincere desire to see an end, for all time, of the American military presence in Southeast Asia to lead us to passage of the Eagleton amendment, we would only open up to the North Vietnamese the possibility for continuing their unfettered aggression in the area. And we would quash any hope whatsoever for securing compliance with the peace agreement with respect to our missing men.

Strong action, courage, and commitment to our principles brought about the successful negotiation of the Paris agreements. The same resolve can now secure compliance with those agreements.

I am not prepared to accept the consequences of a legislated abrogation of the Paris agreements. Of course, I am weary of this fighting. I yield to no Member of this body in desiring a peaceful and just solution to the differences which have divided this region for so long.

But we have a responsibility, an obligation to see our policy successfully through to a lasting peace. And we have an obligation to the nearly 1,300 Americans who are missing throughout Southeast Asia—in North and South Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia.

LIMITING AMENDMENT

Therefore, I am joining with my colleague from North Carolina (Mr. HELMS) in offering an amendment to limit the effect of the Eagleton amendment to the supplemental appropriations bill as long as the North Vietnamese are not complying with their obligations in regard to our missing men.

There can be no justification or rationalization for defaulting on our obligations to nearly 1,300 Americans and to their families, loved ones, and friends who wait and wonder at their fates.

It is difficult for those of us who are not directly affected to grasp the agony, the nightmare being lived by the parents, wives, and children of these missing men. They are in a terrible state of suspense. Their lives, their business affairs, their legal and financial status is plagued by uncertainty. They desperately want to

know the fate of their husbands, sons, and fathers. And any action which delays or hinders North Vietnamese compliance with the Paris agreements on MIA's also prolongs the uncertainty and doubt of their families.

Mr. President, I wonder how these thousands of American wives, fathers, mothers, and children would vote on a measure which remove and weaken the President's leverage for obtaining information on these men?

Success for our policies and an end to the hostilities are near. Dr. Kissinger returns to Paris next month, and he has expressed confidence in the chances for successfully reaching an agreement with North Vietnam. The Congress cannot now—at this crucial time—place these negotiations in jeopardy by enacting a measure which would reduce our leverage to achieve compliance with the Paris agreements. Neither can it further jeopardize the fate of some 1,300 missing Americans. The amendment I offer with my colleague from North Carolina and the other distinguished Senators who have joined in sponsorship, would remove this jeopardy and would maintain this bit of leverage for the President.

We all want an end to hostilities. But, as I have said so many other times on this floor when we were talking about the American prisoners of war, we can say all we want to, but we still have an obligation to the families of those now listed as missing in action. They want to know. They want verification as to whether their son or husband or father is alive or dead.

So what would we do if the Eagleton amendment is agreed to? We would remove the last bit of leverage that the President has. Why should North Vietnam comply at all?

So I suggest, Mr. President, that we are voting today on whether we want North Vietnam to continue to make a sincere effort to account for and verify the status of some 1,300 Americans.

To me, that is an important obligation.

THE VOTE:

[No. 161 Leg.]

YEAS—25

Bartlett	Fannin	Roth
Beall	Griffin	Scott, Pa.
Bellmon	Gurney	Scott, Va.
Brook	Hansen	Sparkman
Buckley	Helms	Taft
Curtis	Hruska	Thurmond
Dole	Jackson	Tower
Domenici	Long	
Eastland	McClure	

NAYS—50

Abourezk	Hartke	Montoya
Alken	Hatfield	Moss
Bayh	Hathaway	Nelson
Bentsen	Hollings	Nunn
Biden	Huddleston	Packwood
Brooke	Hughes	Pastore
Burdick	Humphrey	Pearson
Byrd	Inouye	Pell
Harry F., Jr.	Javits	Percy
Byrd, Robert C	Johnston	Proxmire
Case	Kennedy	Randolph
Chiles	Magnuson	Saxbe
Clark	Mansfield	Schweiker
Cook	Mathias	Stark
Cranston	McClellan	Stevenson
Eagleton	McGovern	Symington
Fulbright	McIntyre	Tunney
Gravel	Metcalfe	Williams
Hart	Mondale	Young

PRESENT AND GIVING A LIVE PAIR, AS
PREVIOUSLY RECORDED—1

Stevens, for.