

Bob Dole



NEWS

U.S. SENATOR FOR KANSAS

FROM:

SENATE REPUBLICAN LEADER

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DOLE: BOSNIA POLICY "FAILURE"

DOLE DECLARES CURRENT POLICY A FAILURE: DO THE MORAL THING,
LIFT ARMS EMBARGO & ALLOW BOSNIANS TO DEFEND THEMSELVES;
DOLE REQUESTS PUBLIC RELEASE OF COMPLETE WHITE HOUSE REPORT

WASHINGTON -- Senate Republican Leader Bob Dole today issued the following statement regarding U.S. policy towards Bosnia and the Serbian regime of hardline communist Slobodan Milosevic:

Last week marked one year of war in Bosnia-Herzegovina, a year of intense suffering for the Bosnian people. Life as they once knew it has ceased to exist. Despite the fact that the vast majority of Bosnia's citizens are living in medieval conditions, they courageously cling to life day after day -- as we watch the horror take place on the evening news.

Troubled by Clinton Reversal, Lack of Full Consultation

While I was encouraged by President Clinton's early statements on Bosnia, I am troubled by the apparent reversal of his position, with the exception of administration actions to increase humanitarian aid to the Bosnian people. With respect to the humanitarian effort, I have strongly supported the air drops and other relief measures. They have made a critical difference and should be stepped up. It was disappointing, therefore, that Administration officials briefing Hill staff last week on the findings of a team of U.S. experts -- who were sent to Bosnia for more than two weeks -- did not share with the Congress the recommendations this team made to high level policy makers at State, the Pentagon and the NSC. In light of this, I have asked for the public release of the team's complete report. Only through full consultations with the Congress can consensus on an effective policy response to the war in Bosnia be achieved.

The Failure of Diplomacy & Sanctions

An effective policy includes one which doesn't just address the symptoms of the war, but the causes of it. We all know who to blame for this bloody war -- Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic and his allies in Bosnia. But, pointing fingers and talking tough have done nothing to halt the spread of 'ethnic cleansing.' Let's not fool ourselves -- the international community's reliance on diplomacy and sanctions has not slowed the Belgrade war machine one bit. The Vance/Owen plan has been signed by the Bosnian Government and Bosnian Croat leaders and rejected by Bosnian Serb leaders, even as they continue their assault on eastern Bosnia.

No matter how you spin it, this policy has been a failure. President Milosevic is so certain of the international community's inability to act that he feels free to mock the Clinton Administration for its strategy.

Lift Arms Embargo, Let Bosnians Defend Themselves

The bottom line is that the genocide in Bosnia will continue unless the Bosnians are given the means to defend themselves. They have the right to self-defense and their survival depends on it. Immediate action must be taken to lift the arms embargo and the United States should take the lead in pressing the United Nations to do so. I am aware that within the Security Council there are concerns related to the safety of personnel conducting humanitarian operations and historic ties with Serbia. There may have to be some trade offs -- some nations may choose to pull troops out. Lifting the arms embargo won't be easy but it's the right thing, the moral thing, to do.

Next week in solemn ceremonies we will open the Holocaust Museum here in Washington and remember atrocities that, perhaps, the civilized world thought would never happen again. Europe and America must act to stop these new atrocities. Moral and strategic considerations should guide us, not bureaucratic concerns for ease and expediency. Let's not give up the option of offering Bosnia-Herzegovina at least the means to defend itself, at least a promise of survival, without even trying.