

Bob Dole



NEWS

U.S. SENATOR FOR KANSAS

FROM:

SENATE REPUBLICAN LEADER

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BOSNIA ARMS EMBARGO BILL

DOLE INTRODUCES BIPARTISAN BILL TO TERMINATE U.S. ARMS EMBARGO AGAINST BOSNIA

I am pleased to be joined by the distinguished Senator from Connecticut, Senator Lieberman, and thirty one additional Republican and Democrat cosponsors. We began the debate on this issue two weeks ago -- on the eve of NATO's meeting on the catastrophe in Gorazde. At that time, there were several Senators who suggested that the Senate wait to vote on this legislation which would unilaterally lift the U.S. arms embargo on Bosnia until after NATO's political council met.

Well, NATO made its decision to issue an ultimatum to the Bosnian Serbs and to authorize air strikes to protect Gorazde and the other safe havens. However, since that time, there have been no air strikes because the U.N. Special Representative, Yasushi Akashi, has refused to authorize them. Meanwhile, Serb violations of the NATO ultimatums are increasing daily, and Bosnian Serb forces are redeploying their tanks unbelievably with UNPROFOR assistance.

On the diplomatic front, the U.S. has also joined with the British, French, Germans, and Russians to form a contact group to press for a ceasefire, and to press for a settlement which would leave the Bosnians with 51% of their country.

Time For U.S. to Lead the Way

In my view, this is hardly progress. We are no closer to a just and workable agreement than we were a year ago. With the exception of the recent Bosnian-Croat federation agreement, the international community is only recycling failed policies -- changing a detail here and there.

The war in Bosnia has gone on for twenty-five months. For twenty-five months the Bosnians have been subjected to the most brutal aggression and denied the ability to defend themselves. It is high time for the United States to lead the way and lift the U.S. arms embargo on Bosnia -- no more speeches, no more excuses, no more handwringing.

Bosnians Want to Defend Themselves

The facts are clear: the arms embargo is illegal and unjust; UNPROFOR, the U.N. Protection Forces, are not protecting Bosnians; and U.N. authority over NATO air strikes has rendered the threat virtually meaningless. And more importantly, the Bosnians don't want American troops -- they merely ask for the weapons to defend themselves, their families and their homes. What is needed is U.S. leadership to turn the corner -- away from ill-conceived U.N.-driven policies and toward a policy that reflects U.S. interests and restores Bosnia's rights.

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* Remarks delivered on the Senate floor, approximately 3:30 PM.