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NEWS

U.S. SENATOR FOR KANSAS

FROM:

SENATE REPUBLICAN LEADER

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Tuesday, May 10, 1994

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LIFT BOSNIA ARMS EMBARGO

BIPARTISAN DOLE/LIEBERMAN BILL REQUIRES END
TO U.S. ARMS EMBARGO AGAINST BOSNIA

I am pleased to be joined by more than thirty cosponsors in this effort to end the U.S. embargo on Bosnia-Herzegovina which for two years now has facilitated Serbian aggression and ethnic cleansing by preventing the Bosnians from defending themselves.

About three weeks ago, the Vice President of Bosnia told me "All we ask for is a limited quantity of defensive weapons, not for victory, but for survival." Two years ago, candidate Bill Clinton told America: "In effect, we're giving a big advantage to the Serbians when there can't be any arms sales" to other Balkan states. "We can't get involved in a quagmire," Governor Clinton said, "but we must do what we can."

That is why we are here today -- to do what we can, to do what is morally right, to provide the leadership only the United States is capable of providing.

The Bosnians say they have fewer than 8 tanks to the Serbs' 300, and one gun for every four Bosnian soldiers. The Bosnians are not asking for American troops. They are ready to do the job themselves, if only they had the means to protect themselves, their homes, and their families.

It seems to me that we Americans, because of our history, have a special understanding for the plight of the Bosnian people. America was once a colony; we struggled against the odds for our independence. And so, we can sympathize with the Bosnians, who strive for freedom and independence, but have had their fate virtually snatched from their hands and placed in the hands of the United Nations Security Council.

International Weakness & Hypocrisy

Let us be clear: the international community's approach has been one of weakness and hypocrisy. Genocide has not been halted, it has been managed. Aggression is not being halted, it is being supervised.

The international community's policy has been a failure and the American people know it. A CNN/TIME magazine poll conducted last week indicates that only 19% of those polled believe U.S. policy in Bosnia has been a success, while 59% believe it has been a failure.

The U.N. and NATO say that genocide will not be tolerated in U.N. "Safe Havens," but outside those areas, ethnic cleansing rages on. In Gorazde -- one of these U.N. declared safe havens, limited action was taken -- but only after the city was nearly destroyed and hundreds were killed. Now Bosnian Serbs are massing their forces in the Brcko area for a new offensive -- but this region is not protected even in theory by NATO air strikes.

U.N. Allows Free Passage of Serb Tanks

Last week, two planes were hit by gunfire on their way into Sarajevo and Bosnian Serbs blocked a convoy bound for the beleaguered people of Gorazde. Nevertheless, negotiators were in Sarajevo at the end of the week talking peace.

The latest news reports are more shocking. Pursuant to a deal cut by U.N. Special Representative Akashi, UNPROFOR allowed Bosnian Serb tanks to have free passage through the Sarajevo exclusion zone -- in blatant violation of the February NATO ultimatum. In addition to assisting Bosnian Serbs in violating the NATO ultimatum, UNPROFOR is helping the Bosnian Serbs to redeploy their tanks, no doubt, so that they can begin new offensives elsewhere. And, we are picking up a big part of the UNPROFOR tab. Reports indicate that some of these tanks are now missing within the Sarajevo exclusion zone.

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Moreover, this morning there are reports that UNPROFOR officials are finally admitting that the Bosnian Serbs are still violating the NATO ultimatum on Gorazde -- with troops and heavy equipment.

U.N.'s Akashi Should Resign

Prime Minister Silajdzic has demanded U.N. Special Representative Akashi's resignation. I have also called repeatedly for Akashi's resignation. Akashi's approach is one of appeasement. He meets with war criminals and calls them friends. And when the United States refuses to send soldiers under U.N. command, he calls us timid. Akashi should be sent packing to a post far away where his weakness and indecisiveness will not cost lives.

Tragically, the international community has shown consistence -- in its weakness and lack of principle. As innocent civilians are slaughtered daily, international leaders invite war criminals to Geneva to discuss peace. U.N. officials speak of the need for neutrality -- as though they are referees in a sports match. The problem is that this game is aggression and the referees are creating an unlevel playing field. Remember, the United Nations was established to protect member states against aggression.

The Bosnians Have Waited Long Enough

How do we bring an end to this multilateral madness?

I would have preferred not to have had to offer this legislation. I would have preferred that the President had called in the congressional leadership to tell us of his decision to lift the U.S. embargo. But, this issue has waited long enough. The Bosnians have waited long enough. The war has gone on for 25 months.

President Clinton says he wants to lift the embargo, but only multilaterally. Now, don't get me wrong -- the Bush administration, too, deserves its fair share of blame for this policy. But, the Clinton administration has been in charge for more than a year -- in effect, by not leading the way, the administration is continuing the Bush policy of denying the Bosnians the ability to defend themselves.

Issue Is American Leadership

This bill is about leadership -- U.S. leadership in doing what is just and what is in the U.S. interest. Lifting the arms embargo against Bosnia is both just and in the U.S. interest. But, the embargo will not be lifted if America waits for a consensus to miraculously emerge -- either within the U.N. Security Council, or in NATO. The United States must act first.

If the United States leads the way, others will follow. And the passage of this bill by the Senate will help our President to convince the British, French, and Russians that allowing the Bosnians to defend themselves is not only legally, but morally correct -- and the only option which offers hope for a permanent settlement in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Embargo Illegal; Violates U.N. Charter

The legal arguments are clear. The arms embargo was imposed on Yugoslavia -- a country which no longer exists -- before Bosnia was recognized and admitted into the United Nations as a member state. Bosnia-Herzegovina is the victim of international aggression and is guaranteed the right to self-defense under Article 51 of the U.N. Charter. One of the cosponsors of this bill, the distinguished Senator from New York, Senator Moynihan, is a former Ambassador to the United Nations and has perhaps the deepest understanding of the international legal questions associated with this matter. Another former U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, Jeane Kirkpatrick, has also extensively discussed and written on this issue -- and supports this bill. Even our current U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, Ambassador Albright, stated a few days ago that "The bottom line here is that this is not a legal issue, it is a political issue."

Which brings me back to leadership. The political issue is U.S. leadership. Is the United States going to continue to go along with and subsidize failed U.N. Security Council policies -- including an illegal arms embargo? Or are we going to break the cycle of failure which has left Bosnia in ruins and which threatens to drag us into the quagmire of implementing a peace settlement which rewards aggression?

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Peace-At-Any-Price Policy

In my view, it is not in the U.S. interest to send thousands of U.S. troops to implement an unjust and unworkable settlement. The administration is now participating in a "contact group" which includes the British, French, Germans, and Russians whose main objective is to persuade the Bosnian government to accept 51% of Bosnia, while allowing the Bosnian Serbs to retain 49% of Bosnia.

This is a peace-at-any-price policy. In a recent meeting, Jeane Kirkpatrick made the point that the United States does not have a stake in where borders are drawn, but how they are drawn. At present, the map of Bosnia is a map of aggression. The negotiators' map is one of slightly reduced aggression.

We all want this war to end, but how can anyone reasonably argue that this sort of resolution will serve U.S. interests? Are we really going to place our troops in harm's way to police the division of Bosnia?

Compelling Reasons for U.S. to End Embargo

The only viable solution to the war in Bosnia is to lift the arms embargo on Bosnia. Last week, former Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, once again made the case for lifting the embargo, in an op-ed in the New York Times. Lady Thatcher cites four reasons why the U.S and Europe have important interests at stake in Bosnia and they are: (1) the credibility of the West, NATO, and the U.N.; (2) the message our weakness sends to other would-be aggressors; (3) the expansion of Serbian aggression that would lead to a wider Balkan war; (4) the potential for a wider war to create floods of refugees across Europe. Yesterday, Albert Wohlstetter, in an op-ed in the Wall Street Journal called the present policy toward Bosnia, "genocide by embargo."

These are compelling reasons for the United States to act -- not by sending ground troops, but by helping the Bosnians to defend themselves.

Addressing Opponents' Arguments

I would like to take a few moments to review the other arguments made by some who question lifting the arms embargo and to respond to them.

(1) Lifting the embargo would stop the delivery of humanitarian assistance. Albert Wohlstetter described this argument as "grotesque." In my view Margaret Thatcher said it best, "Feeding or evacuating the victims rather than helping them resist aggression makes us accomplices as much as good Samaritans." If the Bosnians are armed, they have enough manpower to deliver their own convoys of food. Moreover, as the recent GAO Report on the Effectiveness of U.N. Operations in Bosnia discovered, the U.N. has had limited success in delivering humanitarian aid because it has not been consistently assertive.

(2) Technical problems associated with arming the Bosnians. Some say it will not be easy to deliver arms or that the Bosnians will need training. It seems to me that these same arguments were made before we decided to arm the Afghan resistance, or to provide arms to the Salvadorans. In any event, the Bosnians are better trained overall than the Afghans were. And while logistics may be difficult, they are not impossible since the Bosnians and Croats have managed to bring in some arms themselves. The bottom line is that the Bosnians have not asked us to solve these problems. If the embargo is lifted, other friendly countries will also have the opportunity to assist the Bosnians -- not just the United States, if we so choose.

(3) British and French opposition. The participation of British and French troops in UNPROFOR is the main reason the British and French object to lifting the embargo. Well, the answer is simple: remove UNPROFOR troops. And, until all UNPROFOR troops have been evacuated, threaten the Bosnian Serbs with NATO air strikes if any UNPROFOR troops are taken hostage or harmed, and be prepared to follow-through.

It seems to me that all of these objections obscure the real issue. The real question is whether or not the United States will exert the leadership necessary to end this illegal and immoral embargo on Bosnia and allow the Bosnians to defend their homes and their families. Whether or not it is too late or too difficult is not a decision for us or the international community to make. It is a decision for the Bosnians to make. It is their country, it is their independence, it is their future.

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(4) Lifting the Bosnian arms embargo unilaterally will undermine other U.N. embargoes. The fact is that the arms embargo against Bosnia is illegal and cannot be compared to legal embargoes against Iraq and Libya. We need to remember that Iraq, like Serbia, is an aggressor state, while Bosnia is the victim of aggression with a right to self-defense.

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* Remarks delivered on the Senate floor, approximately 10:25 AM.

" UNITED STATES ARMS EMBARGO OF THE GOVERNMENT OF BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA.

(a) Prohibition . - Neither the President nor any other member of the Executive Branch of the United States Government shall interfere with the transfer of conventional arms appropriate to the self-defense needs of the Government of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

(b) Termination . - The President shall terminate the United States arms embargo of the Government of Bosnia and Herzegovina upon receipt from that government of a request for assistance in exercising its right of self-defense under Article 51 of the United Nations Charter.

(c) Definition . - As used in this section, the term 'United States arms embargo of the Government of Bosnia and Herzegovina' means the application to the Government of Bosnia and Herzegovina of -

(1) the policy adopted July 10, 1991, and published in the Federal Register of July 19, 1991 (58 Fed. Reg. 33322) under the heading 'Suspension of Munitions Export Licenses to Yugoslavia'; and

(2) any similar policy being applied by the United States Government as of the date of receipt of the request described in subsection (a) pursuant to which approval is routinely denied for transfers of defense articles and defense services to the former Yugoslavia.

(d) Nothing in this section shall be interpreted as authorization for deployment of U.S. forces in the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina for any purpose, including training, support or delivery of military equipment."