

Bob Dole



NEWS

U.S. SENATOR FOR KANSAS

FROM:

SENATE REPUBLICAN LEADER

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Thursday, July 14, 1994

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HAITI FACT-FINDING

DOLE URGES SUPPORT FOR BIPARTISAN CONGRESSIONAL COMMISSION: GET THE FACTS, DON'T SHOOT FIRST & ASK QUESTIONS LATER

This a vote about whether we want the facts, or whether we want to stand by while our policy stays on an apparent invasion course.

Let me clear up one issue: I do not care what General Cedras or the other thugs running Haiti think about this or any other proposal. I do not check with Cedras, Aristide or any other Haitians on my view of American national interests. That's what Haiti policy is about -- our national interests. Those who support invasion and nation-building in Haiti have an obligation to say what interests are at stake.

I agree completely with the distinguished Chairman of the Armed Services Committee, Senator Nunn, who said this morning: "if the mission is to alleviate the refugee problem, then I think we first ought to try adjusting the sanction policy...but if the mission is to restore democracy, that's a different mission. It is not primarily a military mission. It is a nation-building mission. And we need to think through that one very carefully "

We invaded Haiti once this century to reverse a military coup. After 100 American casualties and 19 years, America left Haiti. And Haiti returned to violence and anarchy. In my view, we ought to spend some time learning lessons from that intervention before beginning a new one.

Before we get engaged in nation-building in Haiti, we ought to listen to Haiti's democratic parliamentarians. We ought to look at Aristide's leadership in power and in exile. And we ought to look at why reconciliation has not worked in Haiti. That's exactly what a commission would do. If you oppose this commission, you are saying no to the facts, and yes to writing a blank check for military invasion and nation-building in Haiti.

The administration opposes the amendment. Maybe they are afraid of an objective assessment. Maybe they have already decided what they want to do. Maybe this is a set-up to make invasion the only option after creating a refugee crisis. Let me quote from the New York Times from one week ago: "After months of vacillating from one policy to another, America faces the troubling prospect that Mr. Clinton is drifting into using troops in Haiti because he wants to compensate for policy embarrassments and does not have a better idea." That's the New York Times, not exactly a Republican mouthpiece.

This amendment might lead to a commission which would come up with better ideas. I do not know why a 45 day delay would bother the administration -- unless a decision has already been made. Nothing in this amendment ties the President's hands -- it does not even mention the President.

Let us vote on this simple idea -- get the facts, get an objective assessment -- let's not shoot first and ask questions later.

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* Remarks delivered on the Senate floor, approximately 1:35 PM.