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NEWS

FROM:

SENATE REPUBLICAN LEADER



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BOSNIA

CONTINUED SERB DEFIANCE PUTS ADMINISTRATION CREDIBILITY ON LINE: U.S. LEADERSHIP NEEDED TO LIFT ARMS EMBARGO AGAINST BOSNIA

A few weeks ago, the Senate debated the Dole/Lieberman amendment to lift the arms embargo on Bosnia. Administration officials argued that a peace settlement was at hand. We were told that this time, if the Serbs rejected the 51%-49% settlement, the situation would be different. We were told that if the Bosnian Serbs rejected the settlement, as they did the Vance/Owen plan, this time there would be tough consequences. So after high level, intense, administration lobbying including a number of phone calls by the President himself to individual senators who supported our amendment, we lost the vote on a tie. And, for the time being, everyone's attention shifted to the so-called contact group's activities in Geneva.

House/Senate Conference Considering Embargo Amendment

Well, what we see today is that once again, the Bosnian government has signed a peace settlement under pressure from the United States, Europe, and Russia. And, once again, the Bosnian Serbs are playing deadly games of defiance at the expense of the Bosnian people and the credibility of the international community. I hope that the House-Senate conferees on the Defense Authorization Bill are taking a close look at this situation as they begin to discuss the arms embargo provision -- which was passed by a substantial margin in the House.

Bosnian Serb Defiance of Peace Plan

Cleverly, the Bosnian Serbs did not publicly say "no" -- they brought a secret pink envelope to Geneva. But, any way you package their unacceptable conditions, their response is a rejection and not the unconditional "yes" the contact group expected. Some of the news reports indicate that the Russians see something positive in that the Bosnian Serbs are still willing to negotiate. Sure, the Bosnian Serbs would like to continue negotiations -- negotiations are always handy to divert the international community's attention from their activities, such as "ethnic cleansing" in Banja Luka, or their refusal to allow supplies into Gorazde.

The fact is that the Bosnian government -- the victim of aggression -- signed an unjust settlement. The fact is that instead of peace we have Serbian intransigence and defiance. Let's face it, the Bosnian Serbs are still committed to a greater Serbia and they are trying to call the contact group's bluff.

U.S. Relief Plane Comes Under Fire

Today, there was news of several planes delivering humanitarian aid being hit on their way into Sarajevo airport, including a U.S. C-141 -- reportedly an American was injured and the airlift was shut down for the second day in a row. This is no surprise to me, nor should it be to anyone who has watched the course of this brutal war. After two and half years of diplomatic handwringing by the so-called great powers and the absence of American leadership, we can expect no less. Serbian leaders and their forces are getting away with attacks on U.N. Forces and international relief workers, with ethnic cleansing, and with creating a greater Serbia for one reason: because the international community is letting them do so -- and indeed sanctioning it, albeit in a modified form through international negotiations.

Time for International Resolve & U.S. Leadership

So the real question before us today is whether this time is really different, as administration officials claimed before we voted on lifting the arms embargo. Can the international

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community muster enough resolve to act decisively? Or will we again see the international community sweep Bosnian Serb defiance under the carpet and do what is easiest: pressure the victims into further concessions and ultimately into surrender. I am skeptical. So far, what we have heard from the U.S. mediator, Chuck Redman, is that the U.S. is "disappointed" that the contact group will meet by the end of the month to consider the next move -- this is *deja vu*.

Administration's Credibility on the Line

The United States and the other contact group countries made clear on numerous occasions -- including during the G-7 summit -- that there would be tough consequences if the Serbs rejected their proposal, including a vigorous enforcement of the exclusion zones in Bosnia -- which are now being blatantly violated by the Serbs -- and lifting of the arms embargo on the Bosnians.

This vicious circle of denying the Bosnians the right to self-defense under the pretense of defending them needs to be broken. The administration's credibility is on the line. There is no need for further negotiations. What there is need for is U.S. leadership in doing the right thing -- in immediately lifting the arms embargo on the Bosnians.

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** Remarks delivered on Senate floor, approximately 12:50 PM EDT.