



NEWS from U.S. Senator Bob Dole

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CUBAN RELATIONS OFFER LITTLE BENEFIT FOR UNITED STATES SAYS DOLE

Washington, D.C. --- Senator Dole's resolution calling for Cuba to meet four pre-conditions prior to U.S. consideration of normalizing relations with that country, is now pending on the Senate calendar and could be considered at any time.

Following is the full text of a statement Dole made today on the Senate floor about his resolution:

Mr. President, on Monday of this week, I introduced Senate Resolution 182, to express the sense of the Senate with regard to pre-conditions for normalizing relations with the government of Cuba. The purpose of the resolution is to express the concern of Congress and the American people about on-going efforts by the Carter Administration to improve relations with Cuba, despite a number of outstanding problems that remain unresolved.

Several of my distinguished colleagues have asked to be listed as co-sponsors of the resolution, including Senators Jesse Helms, Barry Goldwater, Clifford Hansen, S.I. Hayakawa, James McClure, Ted Stevens, Milton Young, William Scott, Carl Curtis, Strom Thurmond, and Harrison Schmitt.

Mr. President, as I review the controversies surrounding restoration of U.S. relations with Cuba, it seems to me that the principal arguments in favor of normalized relations derive from two basic assumptions: that the United States is somewhat "isolated" in its policy position towards Cuba, and that resumption of normal trade channels with Cuba would somehow benefit U.S. trade interests. I find both of these assumptions inaccurate and basically misconceived.

Furthermore, I have heard suggestions that concern about Cuban involvement in Africa is exaggerated, or that Castro's attitude about human rights is misunderstood. To my own dismay, I have found such suggestions completely undermined by Castro's own public admissions in recent weeks.

At this time, I want to elaborate on these points, and respond to those who still maintain that it is in our own best interests to resume normal ties with the Cuban government.

A Nation Set Apart

There are those who now say that the United States is taking an out-dated and narrow-minded policy perspective towards Cuba. I have found, to the contrary, that the United States is hardly alone in this respect. In fact, more than 60 nations throughout the world do not have diplomatic relations with Cuba at this time. This is dramatic evidence of the prevalent distaste for Castro's Cuban regime, and an impressive fact in view of that government's seventeen year existence.

I will attach at the end of my statement a list of those nations that do not currently have diplomatic relations with Cuba.

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In addition, Mr. President, it should be noted that Castro's Cuban government has been excluded from participation in the Organization of American States since 1962, and does not have membership in either the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (World Bank) or the International Monetary Fund. I draw attention to this point only to demonstrate that Cuba cannot yet be considered a full-fledged participant in the community of respected nations, at least so long as Castro is at the helm.

Cuba - A Poor Trade Partner

Several business groups have recently visited Cuba, and some have come back expressing optimism about potential Cuban markets for American products. Of course, the resumption of exports to Cuba would require the lifting of the 1962 U.S. trade embargo against Cuba. A few of my colleagues in the Senate have already suggested that the embargo be partially lifted to permit the sale of food and pharmaceutical items--presumably as an indication of "good faith" on the part of the United States.

In fact, however, the prospects for significant trade with Cuba in the event that the embargo is lifted are not optimistic. Furthermore Castro himself belittles Congressional initiatives to partially lift that embargo. In an April interview with the French magazine "Afrique-Asie," Castro observed that "at present, certain U.S. Senators propose a lifting of the blockade with regard to food and pharmaceutical products. Yet, that does not solve the problem. A partial lifting is not sufficient. For Cuba, the principal issue is the economic blockade. The question is not how to lift it partially".

There is no doubt in my mind that the resumption of normal trade relations with U.S. is important to the communist dictator. It is the precipitous plunge of world sugar prices which has been among the major factors pushing Castro to the point of expressing interest in improved relations with our government. But Castro is obstinate, and is unwilling to budge an inch until we have completely and unilaterally lifted our trade restrictions against his government.

To those American businessmen who contemplate major new markets just ninety miles from our shores, I will pass on some rather sobering trade prospects formulated by the U.S. Department of Commerce. Cuba, because it has essentially a one-crop economy, has a very limited hard currency capability for purchasing products abroad. Commerce Department figures suggest that the maximum hard currency import capability of the Cuban government over the next two to three years will amount to no more than roughly \$8 hundred million to \$1 billion dollars. The Department anticipates that, under the very best of conditions, brought about by a complete lifting of the U.S. embargo, Cuba could afford to import no more than \$3 hundred million dollars worth of U.S. products at the most. In relation to our annual trade level of about \$1 hundred billion dollars, the Cuban market prospects are relatively insignificant.

It is my understanding that there has been little interest expressed by Cuban officials in future purchases of U.S. wheat. At present, Cuba has been importing about 750,000 tons of Canadian wheat and flour annually on its Soviet account, and there is no reason to believe that they would abandon that source and turn to the United States for grain supplies.

At present, about 60% of Cuban trade is with other Communist countries, and Cuba currently owes the Soviet Union about \$5 billion dollars. This is in addition to a Cuban hard currency debt to non-communist countries estimated at \$1.3 billion dollars by the Central Intelligence Agency. It's clear the Cuban economy is hard-pressed, and I would have to say that the Castro Regime would make a poor trading partner at this time.

Castro Confirms Our Concern

My resolution reflects concern that Cuban Premier Fidel Castro has grand revolutionary designs upon the African continent, reflected in the presence of some 15,000 Cuban troops in various African countries. To my dismay, I have found these concerns essentially confirmed by Castro's own remarks during several recent interviews.

In an interview with ABC television which was broadcast last nite, the Cuban dictator disclosed that he stopped withdrawing Cuban troops from Angola last April, despite his promise in June of 1976 that the 20,000 Cuban troops stationed there would be withdrawn at the rate of 200 a week. State Department officials now estimate that between 10,000 and 15,000 of those troops have never been withdrawn and remain on active duty in Angola.

In an April interview with the French magazine "Afrique-Asie," Castro candidly suggested that "the possibilities of a fundamental revolution are very substantial on the African continent," and stated that "as far as Southern Africa is concerned, I do not believe that peaceful and diplomatic solutions will persuade the racists and their allies to give up their regime." It is clear that Castro envisions a blood-bath throughout Africa, and intends to lend encouragement in that direction.

With respect to human rights--which the President has made a hallmark of his policy towards some Latin American governments--Castro seems to have no understanding of the term. Credible reports from knowledgeable sources indicate that as many as 15,000 Cuban political prisoners, or more, may be held in Castro's jails. For one who declares that Russia "is the freest of all countries," it is natural to comment "why do I have to tolerate the allies of my adversaries? If you want to tolerate them, O.K., but not we." This, in fact, was his response to the interviewer's question about the imprisonment of Cuban political dissidents.

"Normalization" of little benefit to U.S.

On balance, there is little practical reason, from a political or economic standpoint, for the United States to feel compelled to resume ties with the Cuban government at this point. Indeed, from both a moral and political standpoint, there are many reasons why we should not resume normal relations at this time. As I have said many times before, it is foolish for us to give up what "bargaining chips" we have for encouraging observance of human rights in Cuba, and for compelling the withdrawal of Cuban troops from Africa. If there is to be any principle in American foreign policy, and any rational pattern in our international behavior, then this Administration must draw a line on any further concessions towards Cuba until we have seen some tangible progress by the Cuban regime towards resolving outstanding issues between our two countries.

I sincerely hope that Congress is able to communicate a message to the White House that will be fully heeded, with respect to future U.S. policy towards Cuba. My resolution intends to convey such a message, and I hope my colleagues in the Senate will support it heartily.