

STATEMENT BY SENATOR BOB DOLE

KOREAN POLICY: "JOINT CONSULTATION"?

July 26, 1977

Mr. President, the Secretary of Defense is in South Korea for two days of talks with government officials. The purpose of his mission is reported to be a discussion of the timing of withdrawal of 33,000 American ground troops, and he is also to discuss compensatory measures for maintaining South Korea's defenses. The Administration's plans for pulling out of South Korea, then, are proceeding full speed ahead, without resort to the "joint consultation" with Congress mandated by this body only five weeks ago.

It is clear testimony, I think, that the effort waged by the distinguished Majority Leader on the Senate floor on June 16 was a smokescreen to protect the President's intentions in South Korea. On that date, I proposed to recommit the Foreign Relations Authorization Bill to Committee, with the intent of striking language which endorsed the troop withdrawal plan.

In an effort to counteract my proposal, the Majority Leader moved to modify the language in a way that he claimed would "assure Senators that any decision with respect to the withdrawal or reduction of troops in Korea will be arrived at by joint decision of the President and the Congress." The Majority Leader presented a persuasive case. His effort was successful.

And today the Secretary of Defense is in South Korea laying the final plans for pulling all U.S. ground troops out of South Korea.

Certainly, my impression was that a "consultation with Congress" would involve all the members -- that it would involve an opportunity for full consideration and discussion on the House and Senate floors by members of all persuasions. Perhaps closed discussions have taken place between the Administration and selected members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. I don't know. I do know that the Senate from Kansas was not privy to any such consultation. A "joint decision of the President and the Congress," in my opinion, should have the input of the full Congress, and not just a selected portion of it.

NO CONSULTATION WITH CONGRESS

Mr. President, I am not aware that the Administration has reached this point in its policy plans through a "joint decision" with Congress. I am not aware of any resolution passed by this Congress of the United States which tells the President:

"It is our decision to agree with your plans for troop withdrawals from South Korea, and you should proceed with discussions on timing and compensatory aid."

Yet, this, in effect, is what the distinguished Majority Leaders and others who spoke on behalf of the Administration inferred would constitute a joint decision on future U.S. policy towards South Korea.

In the words of the distinguished Majority Leader on June 16: "I desired to assure that Congress would be consulted. To assure that reports would be regularly made to the Congress, and to assure that the policy with respect to withdrawal would be a policy that would be implemented through joint consultation between the President and the Congress." And so his amendment to the foreign relations authorization measure was adopted, with Congress fully confident that the President would heed the advice of this body as a whole and undertake "consultation" with respect to any reduction in ground forces in South Korea.

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Mr. President, I do not believe that declarations of this type approved by Congress should be taken lightly by the Administration. I do not believe they should be offered lightly by those who seek to advance the President's policies on the floor of the Senate. I do believe that they should involve input by all Members of Congress, through accepted forms of consideration on the House and Senate floors.

The President will need to come to Congress to get approval of credit sales or loans for Korean purchases of American military equipment to compensate for troop withdrawals. According to Pentagon estimates, that need may be quite large--perhaps as much as \$8 billion in additional military equipment. If the President intends to substitute such equipment for our troops, as he has publicly suggested, he is going to need the cooperation of the Members of Congress. There is all the more reason, then, that he should consult closely and work cooperatively with Congress at every stage of implementation of his program.

#### CONCERN ABOUT WITHDRAWAL PERSISTS

I know that many American citizens, as well as many of my colleagues in the Senate, continue to share my real concern about the risks involved in withdrawing some 33,000 American troops from South Korea within the next five years. The President claims to have taken into consideration all the possible repercussions of this policy. I certainly hope he has done so in a thoughtful manner. He has rejected a recommendation by the Joint Chiefs of Staff that only 7,000 troops be withdrawn over a five year period. He has transferred the third-ranking American military commander in Korea to another post because of this public assessment that the withdrawal will lead to war. He is taking upon himself the risk that a crisis may very well be created in a place where none currently exists.

The President adamantly maintains that our commitment to defend South Korea against outside aggression remains strong, and he conjectures that this declaration will deter North Korea from initiating hostile action against the south.

In order to maintain a credible commitment to Korea, however, the United States must have potential logistical support to fulfill that commitment. The status of American forces in Japan clearly relies upon the variabilities of politics there. The Administration has indicated its plans to phase out our forces in Taiwan. Bases in Thailand are already closed. The Administration is now negotiating new base agreements with the Philippines and presumably will lower our strength there. It is becoming painfully obvious that the U.S. has no viable alternative base structure in East Asia that could adequately sustain a full-scale challenge to our commitment to South Korea.

For these reasons, Mr. President, I continue to oppose implementation of the President's planned withdrawal of all U.S. ground forces in South Korea. I had hoped that those plans would be reconsidered and perhaps adjusted "in consultation with Congress". But it now appears that the Administration is moving forward with its withdrawal policy. Only time can determine the wisdom of that move. But the responsibility will ultimately rest with this Administration -- not with Congress or the Joint Chiefs of Staff.