



NEWS from U.S. Senator Bob Dole

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DOLE INTRODUCES CARTER-TORRIJOS LANGUAGE AS CANAL AMENDMENTS

WASHINGTON, D.C.--Senator Bob Dole today introduced two amendments to the Panama Canal Treaties. The amendments are based upon the joint statements of General Omar Torrijos and President Carter last Friday.

Following is the text of Dole's introductory statement:

Mr. Dole. Mr. President, I am today proposing two amendments to the "Treaty concerning the permanent neutrality and operation of the Panama Canal" which is now pending before the United States Senate. My amendments are based upon the joint statement issued by President Carter and Panamanian General Omar Torrijos last Friday concerning American defense and passage rights to be guaranteed under this Treaty. The Carter-Torrijos statement was intended to reconcile differing interpretations of our rights to defend the canal and to transit the canal quickly in time of crisis. My amendments are intended to clear up the ambiguities in the Treaty itself which caused those differences in interpretation. In so doing, I am using virtually the same language contained in the joint statement of October 14.

A Positive Step

I think that the joint statement issued on Friday by President Carter and General Torrijos was a step in the right direction in clearing up confusion over our defense and passage rights under the Panama Canal Treaty. This had become a source of extreme concern to myself, and to many other members of the Senate. The Carter-Torrijos statement indicates that there is, at least, some agreement between the two heads of state about United States rights under the Treaty. But it doesn't end there. The solution is not that simple.

Since the leaders of both nations have agreed upon this more specific language, it should be incorporated into the Treaty itself. There is no longer any justification for leaving the Treaty language ambiguous. In fact, it is essential that the Treaty itself be modified to reflect the agreement.

Agreement Must Be Written Into Law

It is important to remember that the joint statement, by itself, is not binding. It has no legal effect. Neither Carter nor Torrijos will occupy positions of authority when the Treaty provisions becomes significant in the year 2000, so there must be some basis in law to ensure that their pledge will be honored.

It is for that reason, that I am introducing these two amendments to the Treaty on permanent neutrality, containing language which is virtually identical to that in the Carter-Torrijos statement.

Because my amendments seek to incorporate the same language used in the statement, I trust that the Administration will have no objections to their adoption by the Senate. For several weeks now, the Administration has argued that any amendments or reservations to the Panama Canal Treaties would be unacceptable because they would require re-negotiation on certain portions of the Treaties. But the Carter-Torrijos agreement disproves the notion that re-negotiation of certain parts of these Treaties is impossible. It disproves the notion that the present proposal is necessarily "the best Treaty we can get."

In fact, improvements in both the basic Treaty and the Treaty on permanent neutrality are both possible and practical. I believe that Congress has a responsibility to continue to press for direct clarifications and improvements in both Treaties. Certainly, the joint statement issued last Friday would never have been made if Congressional pressure for clarification had not been exerted during the past several days.

Previously, I introduced amendments and reservations bearing on other aspects of these Treaties as well. Each of them is based upon genuine concern about significant portions of the Treaties. I do not undertake these modification efforts lightly. But I do think that this recent instance has demonstrated just how important it is that all of us in the Senate continue to carefully analyze this Treaty for possible defects or omissions. And if we find them, we must seek to correct them. This is our constitutional responsibility and our duty to the American people.

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AMENDMENTS TO THE TREATY CONCERNING THE PERMANENT NEUTRALITY AND OPERATION OF
THE PANAMA CANAL:

viz: At the end of the first paragraph of article VI, add the following: "The provisions of this paragraph are for the purpose of, and shall be construed as, assuring the transit of such vessels through the Canal as quickly as possible, without any impediment, with expedited treatment, and in case of need or emergency, assuring that such vessels go to the head of the line of vessels awaiting transit of the Canal, in order to transit the Canal rapidly."

viz: At the end of article IV, add the following: "Each of the Parties shall, in accordance with their respective constitutional processes, defend the Canal against any threat to such regime of neutrality, and shall have the right to act against any aggression or threat directed against the Canal or against the peaceful transit of vessels through the Canal. Any United States action shall be directed at insuring that the Canal shall remain open, secure, and accessible, and such action shall not be directed against the territorial integrity or political independence of the Republic of Panama."