



NEWS from U.S. Senator Bob Dole

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 15, 1979

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DOLE CITES ADMINISTRATION'S LACK OF RESOLVE AS FACTOR IN IRAN, AFGHANISTAN CRISES

WASHINGTON--Senator Bob Dole (R-Kan.) today cited "lack of resolve on the part of the Carter Administration" and a "steady deterioration of American will, both at home and abroad, since the Vietnam War era" as factors which have led to the current situation in Iran and neighboring Afghanistan.

"I have been very reluctant to criticize the President in the sphere of foreign affairs, believing, as do most members of the Congress, that a President should be allowed a certain latitude in the conduct of foreign policy. But the events of the past few months--indeed the past few years--have disturbed me greatly. When I have spoken out on the subject I have said that the Administration has sounded an uncertain trumpet, that our allies have been sent conflicting signals, and that our potential enemies have been encouraged to believe that we lack the will to act decisively on the world stage," said Dole.

"We are now reaping the results of such a policy--or lack of policy--in Iran and Afghanistan. It is not my purpose to get into a debate about 'who lost Iran'. Such a debate, at this juncture, would be debilitating. But I do think there are legitimate questions which must be asked of recent events in the Middle East," said Dole.

"First, why did the Administration--and the State Department--hesitate so long before ordering the evacuation of American nationals and government personnel from Iran? I have it on good authority that the American Embassy was receiving small arms fire as early as last Sunday and that personnel in Teheran anticipated a threat from leftist demonstrators well before the actual attack on the Embassy took place.

"Second, why did the Administration fail to move American military forces into forward positions? Have we reached a point where our movement is so restricted, our options are so limited, that we are unable to move rescue and support forces to within 4000 miles of Iran or Afghanistan? In the midst of the Iranian crisis the Administration started the aircraft carrier Constitution out of Subic Bay, and headed it towards the Persian Gulf, where it might have been of some use yesterday. But then the Administration changed its mind, and now the carrier is circling aimlessly off the straits of Malacca. The Administration sent a squadron of F-15's over Saudi Arabia--and then announced they were unarmed. Is it any wonder that other nations do not know what to make of our actions?

"Third, why have we not protested more vigorously the involvement of Soviet personnel in the incident which led to the death of our Ambassador to Afghanistan? Again, I have it on extremely good authority that the Soviets not only directed the ill-fated "rescue" attempt, but that they had previously provided arms to the insurgents who executed the kidnapping. This is a most serious matter, and worthy of more than a meeting at the State Department with Ambassador Dobrynin," said Dole.

"Never in this century has the United States, and her citizens abroad, been so vulnerable to acts of aggression and terrorism. I must say I agree with an editorial in today's Wall Street Journal which states, 'rebels do not kidnap Russians; it is much safer to pick up Americans.' Make no mistake: I am not advocating that we picture ourselves as world policemen, nor that we return to the 'bully' politics of Teddy Roosevelt. But I also don't believe we should be leaving the impression, as I believe we have done in recent years, that we can be bullied with a carbine and a cause," said Dole.

"Strategic analyst Albert Wohlstetter has remarked that the worst thing about the Vietnam war was bound to be the lessons we drew from it. Certainly the timidity and indecisiveness shown by the Carter Administration seems to have at its base a fear of appearing arrogant in the wake of that tragic experience. But there are lessons to be drawn from the recent events in the Middle East as well: a lack of resolve will only encourage others to join those who are already tweaking our nose. Unless we show some backbone soon, we will be inviting a far more serious confrontation further down the road. Already, based on recent performance, there are those who believe we lack the will to stand up to such a test," concluded Dole.