



NEWS from U.S. Senator Bob Dole

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U.S. MUST CONTINUE INVOLVEMENT IN MIDDLE EAST

WASHINGTON--The following is Senator Bob Dole's statement on the Mideast Peace Agreement as the Senate debated appropriating funds to help put the peace pact in effect: "Great hope for peace in the Middle East was raised by the signing of the Egyptian-Israeli Peace Agreement and the euphoria that followed has eased into a mood of subdued expectations. In the months ahead we await the resolution of remaining, unanswered questions and the determination of the participants' goodwill towards each other. But I believe this agreement can form the basis for a stable, long-lasting, and comprehensive peace for that tragic land.

"I am by nature an optimist, and I foresee that when the other Arab states see the eventual benefits arising out of this historic rapprochement, their strident denunciations will moderate and they will be more inclined to join this policy of reason, and abandon the habit of violence, terror and war. It may take a long time and require much effort from all parties, as did this agreement. It is now and will continue to be in the best interests of the United States to encourage this process, to take an active role whenever required and to help however we are able.

"For there is an inescapable fact about the world embodied in the framework of this peace treaty; smaller, vulnerable nations cannot afford to compromise their security unless their strongest ally--the United States--shows itself willing to become involved in the settlement and what must come afterwards. Israel exists on the thin margin of survival, surrounded, until now, by a sea of hostility and defended only by the blood of her citizens. By leaning on the United States for necessary support these nations gambled to end three decades of bloodshed on terms acceptable to both parties. President Sadat of Egypt and Prime Minister Begin of Israel desperately needed American military strength, American economic assistance, and American political commitment.

"Peace is a very valuable and all too rare commodity in the Middle East. Peace is also of strategic importance, not only to the parties directly involved, but also to the United States. Many Americans have contacted me and other members of the Congress, however, concerning the high cost of this agreement in terms of American tax dollars. We have closely scrutinized foreign aid requests, especially in this era of fiscal restraint and inflation, to be sure the costs are reasonable in terms of our foreign policy goals. In this case, for instance, the cost of another Mid-East war would be astronomical and would undoubtedly exceed the cost of our present foreign assistance to all Mid-East nations combined, besides the long-term detrimental effect on all U.S. taxpayers. The U.S. commitment to this agreement is reasonable and equitable. The majority of American aid will be in the form of loans only, to Egypt and Israel, at the current commercial interest rate of about 10%. Our actual investment is low, therefore, and the profits of peace we shall reap will be great not only for Egypt and Israel, but for all mankind.

"President Sadat and Prime Minister Begin showed their peoples how to respond reasonably to the ferment of change in the world. Both men took great risks for the good of their countries. If we can help keep that spirit of peace alive and prospering we may indeed be able to look forward to a true Middle East settlement. Mr. President, I believe this legislation, favorably acted upon by the Senate, will aid in this endeavor."