

News from Senator

BOB DOLE



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DOLE HAILS REAGAN DECISION TO LIFT EMBARGO

WASHINGTON -- Senator Bob Dole (R-Kan.), a senior member of the Senate Agriculture Committee, today hailed President Reagan's decision to halt the 15-month embargo on grain sales to the Soviet Union, saying, "it lifts a great load from the backs of American farmers."

Dole, who has consistently voiced his opposition to the embargo since it was implemented by President Carter, said today's action "relieves the American farm community of a burden it has carried since January 1980.

"I think American farmers will respect President Reagan for his decision to lift this embargo. They should also take their hats off to Secretary of Agriculture John Block, who has labored long to convince Americans that farmers should not be the first line of defense in foreign policy matters.

"The President made his pledge during the campaign, and throughout his first 90 days in office has assured those of us in Congress that his intention was to rescind the embargo.

"However, I know that the Administration did not make its decision without carefully weighing the foreign policy implications of such a move. It is clear that the American people stand behind the President in condemning the unwarranted intervention into Afghanistan by the Soviet Union. And it is equally clear that any similar attempts to interfere in the internal affairs of Poland would be met with harsh condemnation by the United States.

"But the United States also cannot continue to labor under the misconception that the grain embargo alone is a major deterrent to Soviet aggression. Studies since the embargo was begun indicate that it had little effect on the lives of the Soviet people, since transshipments of grain adequately made up any shortfall.

Americans Paid the Price

"Additionally, there is evidence to indicate that the major damage done by the embargo was not to the Soviet Union, but to the American farmer and the average American taxpayer. The total cost of the embargo has been estimated at close to \$5 billion, and this does not even take into consideration lost U.S. export opportunities or the negative effect the embargo had on domestic farm prices.

A New Agreement

"I would urge the Administration to work towards an early meeting with the Soviets to begin forging a new grain agreement on additional sales of U.S. wheat and feedgrains in the current fifth year of the U.S./U.S.S.R. Grains Agreement, which expires at the end of September. With large supplies and the prospect of bumper production later this year, we should do whatever we can to compensate for sales lost during the embargo. In addition, I urge the Administration to initiate discussions as soon as possible on the terms of a successor agreement for agricultural trade between our two countries. These conditions could possibly include processed as well as bulk commodities, depending on U.S. availability and Soviet import requirements."