

News from Senator

BOB DOLE



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STATEMENT OF SENATOR BOB DOLE ON CONTRA PLAN

PRINCIPLES OF NEGOTIATIONS

THE CONGRESSIONAL LEADERSHIP -- SENATOR BYRD, SPEAKER WRIGHT, CONGRESSMAN MICHEL AND MYSELF -- MET WITH THE PRESIDENT THIS MORNING. IT WAS A GOOD MEETING AND, AS I THINK MOST SENATORS KNOW, DID RESULT IN GENERAL AGREEMENT ON SOME PRINCIPLES GOVERNING THE SEARCH FOR A NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT IN CENTRAL AMERICA.

UP FRONT, LET ME COMMEND THE PRESIDENT FOR UNDERTAKING AND GIVING LEADERSHIP TO THIS EFFORT. AND I WOULD SAY THE SAME FOR SPEAKER WRIGHT. IT HAS TAKEN SOME REAL COURAGE AND STATESMANSHIP ON THE PART OF BOTH MEN.

A DETERMINED PRESIDENT

THERE ARE RISKS. BUT THE PRESIDENT IS DETERMINED TO FIND A REAL AND LASTING PEACE IN CENTRAL AMERICA -- IF ONE IS AVAILABLE. HE'S PREPARED TO GO THE EXTRA MILE -- IF THAT CAN LEAD US WHERE WE WANT TO GO. HE'S PREPARED TO DO WHAT IS NECESSARY -- TO GET THE KIND OF OUTCOME WE NEED AND WANT.

WE MAY HEAR SOME CRITICISM OF THIS EFFORT, I SUPPOSE. I ALREADY HEAR SOME COMMENTS QUESTIONING THE MOTIVES OR GOOD FAITH; SOME MAY QUESTION THE WISDOM OF THIS APPROACH. BUT I WANT TO UNDERSCORE THIS: THE PRESIDENT IS SINCERE; HE'S COMMITTED TO SEEING IF AN ACCEPTABLE PEACE IS AVAILABLE; AND HE'S GOING TO SEE THIS THROUGH.

BROAD OUTLINE, NOT DETAILED PLAN

LET ME STRESS, TOO, THAT WHAT WE HAVE IS A GENERAL STATEMENT OF GOALS AND PRINCIPLES, WITH A BROAD OUTLINE OF HOW TO GET FROM HERE TO THERE. WE HAVE NOT SETTLED ON ANY A-TO-Z, FULLY DEVELOPED, DETAILED PLAN.

THE PRESIDENT, AND THE REST OF US, HAVE SAID WE WANT TO EXPLORE A PROCESS, TO SEE IF IT CAN LEAD TO PEACE. AND WE HAVE SAID: IT WILL LEAD TO PEACE -- THE KIND OF REAL, DURABLE PEACE WE WANT -- ONLY IF IT MEETS CERTAIN PRINCIPLES AND AIMS AT CERTAIN GOALS.

VITAL DETAILS TO RESOLVE

THERE ARE MANY, MANY DETAILS -- SOME OF THEM CRITICAL DETAILS -- THAT HAVE TO BE WORKED OUT, AND WORKED OUT IN PARTICULAR WAYS, IF THIS GENERAL STATEMENT IS TO BE TURNED INTO AN ACTUAL PROCESS LEADING TO PEACE IN CENTRAL AMERICA.

STARTING TOMORROW, THE CENTRAL AMERICAN PRESIDENTS WILL BE MEETING IN A KIND OF REGIONAL SUMMIT. CERTAINLY, WE WILL WANT TO GET SOME FEEDBACK FROM THEM ON THEIR REACTION TO THE IDEAS WE ARE OFFERING. ULTIMATELY, THEIR OWN FUTURE AND THEIR VITAL INTERESTS ARE ON THE LINE, AS MUCH AS OURS.

MONITORING AND VERIFICATION CENTRAL

OBVIOUSLY, ONE OF THE MOST CRITICAL OF ALL THE FACTORS THAT HAS TO BE MORE FULLY DEVELOPED IS THE VERIFICATION REGIME, OR REGIMES, THAT WOULD BE PUT IN PLACE -- TO MAKE SURE ALL SIDES ARE LIVING UP TO THEIR WORD. THAT'S SOMETHING WE'RE INSISTING ON -- SOMETHING THAT HAS TO BE SETTLED FIRST AND UP FRONT -- IF THIS PROCESS IS TO GO ANYWHERE. WHETHER THE SANDINISTAS SHOW ANY WILLINGNESS TO ACCEPT GOOD MONITORING AND VERIFICATION -- BY AN EFFECTIVE, CREDIBLE, INDEPENDENT BODY -- WILL BE AN EARLY TEST OF THE FUTURE OF THIS WHOLE EFFORT.

WHEN SEPTEMBER 30 ROLLS AROUND...

THE BOTTOM LINE IS THIS: WHEN SEPTEMBER 30 ROLLS AROUND, I WANT IT TO BE CLEAR TO CONGRESS WHO IS SERIOUS ABOUT PEACE AND WHO ISN'T; SO CONGRESS CAN MAKE AN INFORMED JUDGMENT ABOUT WHERE WE GO FROM THERE, ON CONTRA AID OR ANY OTHER OPTION BEFORE US.

CONTINUED COMMITMENT TO CONTRAS

AND, FINALLY, MR. PRESIDENT, LET ME SAY THAT ONE ABIDING ELEMENT OF THIS COMPILATION OF IDEAS IS THAT WE WILL NOT ABANDON THE DEMOCRATIC RESISTANCE FORCES -- OR COMPROMISE ON THEIR RIGHT TO PLAY A FULL ROLE IN NICARAGUA'S POLITICAL FUTURE. THE PRINCIPLES INCLUDE A STATEMENT THAT ANY CEASEFIRE ARRANGEMENT MUST BE ACCEPTABLE TO THE FREEDOM FIGHTERS. THEY MUST SEE IT AS IN THEIR INTEREST.

I CERTAINLY UNDERSTAND, AS THE PRESIDENT DOES, THAT NO ARRANGEMENTS UNDER A CEASEFIRE CAN PERMIT THE SANDINISTAS TO TAKE MILITARY OR POLITICAL ADVANTAGE OF THE SITUATION; TO UNDERMINE, WEAKEN AND DISPERSE EITHER THE CONTRAS OR THEIR SUPPORTERS; OR TO KEEP THEIR FORCES FULLY SUPPLIED, WHILE THE CONTRAS "WITHER ON THE VINE."

THE PRESIDENT MADE THESE AND OTHER POINTS CLEAR IN OUTLINING HIS OWN UNDERSTANDING OF THE IDEAS WE HAVE AGREED ON. IN FACT, THE WHITE HOUSE HAS SPECIFICALLY OUTLINED FOR US THIS MORNING ITS UNDERSTANDING OF AT LEAST 21 KEY POINTS IN THE PROPOSAL THAT HAS BEEN RELEASED. OTHERS MAY DIFFER WITH THE PRESIDENT AND THE WHITE HOUSE ON A FEW OF THESE POINTS.

I HAVE UNDERSCORED MY OWN UNDERSTANDINGS AND FEELINGS, BOTH IN OUR MEETINGS WITH THE PRESIDENT AND IN A LETTER I SENT TO THE PRESIDENT EARLIER THIS WEEK ON THIS SUBJECT. AND I WOULD ASK CONSENT, AT THIS POINT, TO INCLUDE THAT LETTER IN THE RECORD.

SUPPORT FOR AID TO CONTRAS

AND LET ME ADD ONE THING: I CONTINUE TO STRONGLY SUPPORT AID TO THE CONTRAS. WITHOUT KEEPING THAT OPTION VERY MUCH ALIVE AND OPEN -- UNLESS THE SANDINISTAS ARE CONVINCED WE ARE PREPARED TO PLAY THAT CARD AGAIN, IF THEY START STALLING AND STONEWALLING -- THIS NEGOTIATING EFFORT WILL NOT BEAR FRUIT.

SO LET ME MAKE CLEAR TO THE SENATE, AND TO MANAGUA -- AND, FOR THAT MATTER, MOSCOW AND HAVANA -- THAT IF THE SANDINISTAS DO NOT TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY FOR PEACE; FOR INSURING WHAT THEY CLAIM THEY WANT -- A NICARAGUA AT PEACE, FREE FROM OUTSIDE THREAT, FREE TO SET ITS OWN COURSE, IN RESPONSE TO THE NEEDS AND WISHES OF ALL THE NICARAGUAN PEOPLE -- UNLESS THE SANDINISTAS TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO ACHIEVE THAT KIND OF NICARAGUA THROUGH NEGOTIATIONS; I WILL BE LEADING THE FIGHT TO WIN THAT KIND OF NICARAGUA, THROUGH SUPPORT FOR THE DEMOCRATIC RESISTANCE.

THE FIRST STEPS ON THE EXTRA MILE

SO, IN SUM, MR. PRESIDENT, WHAT WE HAVE ACCOMPLISHED IS FAR FROM AN END; BUT IT IS A NEW AND HOPEFUL BEGINNING. BIPARTISAN; UNDERTAKEN BY MEN AND WOMEN OF GOOD FAITH IN THE WHITE HOUSE AND THE CONGRESS; IN BOTH PARTIES. ALL OF US AMERICANS. ALL OF US WHO SHARE THE GOALS OF AMERICA'S OWN SECURITY; THE PEACE AND STABILITY OF CENTRAL AMERICA; AND DEMOCRACY FOR ALL THE PEOPLE OF THIS HEMISPHERE.

I DON'T KNOW WHETHER THIS BEGINNING WILL LEAD TO A BREAKTHROUGH. I DO KNOW THAT, WITHOUT NEW EFFORTS AND INITIATIVES, WE WILL NEVER ACHIEVE THE KIND OF BREAKTHROUGH WE ALL NEED -- TOWARD A NEW SPIRIT OF BIPARTISANSHIP, SUPPORTIVE OF THE PRESIDENT, FULLY INVOLVING THE CONGRESS AND AIMED AT COMMON GOALS.