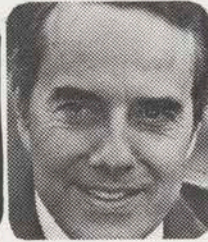


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Talking With Kansans

Senator Bob Dole



SOVIET GAMBIT ON CHEMICAL WEAPONS; SOUNDS GOOD, BUT LET'S LOOK AT THE RECORD

With their now familiar sense of timing and public relations savvy, the Soviets have seized the opportunity presented by the recent Paris chemical weapons conference to announce they will start destroying chemical weapons.

We welcome this announcement just as we welcome their apparently cooperative attitude on helping check chemical weapons proliferation. But just as we must for any initiative by the Soviet Union, let's go over their offer with a fine-toothed comb. When it comes to dealing with the Communists, I'm with Ronald Reagan -- "trust, but verify."

No doubt, this latest Gorbachev gambit will quickly lead to calls for an end to U.S. production of new binary chemical weapons. But before we mix apples and oranges, here are some points to remember.

The fact is, the United States has been destroying chemical weapons for years. It's good to hear the Soviets will finally do the same. Meanwhile -- and it will take years of destruction to change this -- the Soviets maintain the world's largest chemical weapons stockpile; research and development effort; production capacity; and force structure for chemical weapons use.

Prior to 1985, the Soviet Union supplied for use -- or used -- toxin weapons in Cambodia, Laos and Afghanistan. Toxin weapons are illegal under the 1972 Biological Weapons Convention, and their first use in war is prohibited by the Geneva Protocol of 1925. Currently, the USSR maintains a number of illegal biological weapons facilities.

This massive Soviet capability, along with chemical weapons possession by some third world states, is why the United States is producing a small stockpile of modern binary chemical weapons. Only an effectively verifiable, truly world-wide chemical weapons ban can justify an end to U.S. binary production.

Let's face it, the Soviets only got serious about negotiating when Congress approved binary chemical weapons production. Despite the whining of critics, Congress approved chemical weapons production, a move that paid off because it finally brought the Soviets to the bargaining table. It's the same show of resolve and determination that convinced the Kremlin to negotiate last year's historic nuclear arms control treaty - the first treaty that actually eliminated two classes of nuclear weapons. The bottom line is this -- the Soviets respect strength, and unless we have it, we're in trouble. History tells us that we won't get a chemical weapons ban if the United States independently ends binary production.

We've heard alot from Moscow about Glasnost, arms control, troop cutbacks and now chemical weapons. We're listening, but we're also watching for action.