

News from Senator

BOB DOLE



(R - Kansas)

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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DOLE: KEEP A LOCK ON THE CANAL UNTIL NORIEGA GETS THE BOOT

WASHINGTON -- SENATE REPUBLICAN LEADER BOB DOLE (R-KS.) DELIVERED THIS FLOOR STATEMENT TODAY IN SUPPORT OF THE COATS AMENDMENT ON PANAMA:

I AM PLEASED TO JOIN THE DISTINGUISHED SENATOR FROM INDIANA, SENATOR COATS, IN SPONSORING THIS IMPORTANT AND TIMELY AMENDMENT. WE OFTEN DESCRIBE THE LEGISLATION WE AUTHOR OR SUPPORT AS "SENDING A MESSAGE." CANDIDLY, I THINK WE'D HAVE TO ADMIT, SOME -- MAYBE MOST -- OF THOSE MESSAGES DON'T REALLY AMOUNT TO MUCH. SOMETIMES, THOUGH, THE MESSAGES ARE REAL, CLEAR AND IMPORTANT. THIS IS ONE SUCH CASE.

THIS AMENDMENT IS A MESSAGE FOR MANUEL NORIEGA, THE DRUG-DEALING DICTATOR OF PANAMA, AND FOR THE PANAMANIAN PEOPLE. THE MESSAGE DOESN'T MINCE WORDS: THE UNITED STATES SENATE DOES NOT INTEND TO TURN OVER THE PANAMA CANAL TO PANAMANIAN CONTROL, UNTIL NORIEGA IS GIVEN THE "BOOT" HE SO RICHLY DESERVES.

SPECIFICALLY, THIS LEGISLATION CALLS ON THE U.S. GOVERNMENT TO "FREEZE" THE NEXT STEPS IN THE PROCESS OF TURNING OVER THE CANAL, UNTIL NORIEGA GOES. IT SAYS THAT THE SENATE DOES NOT INTEND TO MOVE ON GIVING ADVICE AND CONSENT TO ANY CANAL ADMINISTRATOR NOMINATED BY NORIEGA.

AS THE PRESIDENT HAS MADE CLEAR, WE ARE GOING FORWARD -- WITH THE PANAMANIAN PEOPLE AND THE OTHER NATIONS OF THE HEMISPHERE -- IN TRYING TO RESTORE DEMOCRACY TO PANAMA. BUT IN THE MEANTIME, WE ARE NOT GOING TO AGREE TO PUTTING VITAL AMERICAN INTERESTS LIKE THE PANAMA CANAL MORE FIRMLY IN THE CLUTCHES OF A DICTATOR AND DRUG-PUSHER LIKE NORIEGA.

ELEVEN YEARS AGO, DURING THE CANAL TREATIES DEBATE, I STOOD ON THE FLOOR OF THE SENATE AND SAID: "THE CREDIBILITY AND PERSONAL INTEGRITY [OF PANAMA'S LEADERS] WILL BEAR UPON THEIR RELIABILITY AS PANAMA'S GUARANTORS OF THE NEW TREATIES." I WAS RIGHT THEN, AND ALL OF US WHO ARE JOINING IN SUPPORTING THE COATS LEGISLATION ARE RIGHT TODAY.

THIS IS A "YELLOW LIGHT" ON THE ROAD TO A FULL TURN-OVER OF THE CANAL. BUT THERE IS A "RED LIGHT" -- THE BINDING VERSION OF THIS SAME LEGISLATION -- JUST A BIT FURTHER DOWN THE ROAD. AND IF THE PANAMANIAN PEOPLE MISS THIS SIGNAL, AND NORIEGA IGNORES THIS CAUTION LIGHT, SENATOR COATS AND I AND MANY OTHERS ARE GOING TO BE BACK HERE AGAIN -- TO SEND ANOTHER, EVEN STRONGER AND CLEARER "RED LIGHT" MESSAGE, THAT NO ONE WILL BE ABLE TO MISTAKE OR IGNORE.

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