

News from Senator

BOB DOLE



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DOLE SAYS DON'T PULL THE PLUGS ON INTERNATIONAL CONTACTS,
EVEN THE PLO

MR. PRESIDENT:

I JOIN THE DISTINGUISHED MAJORITY LEADER IN URGING A VOTE TO TABLE THIS AMENDMENT.

WE HAVE WORKED LONG AND HARD TO WORK OUT SOME LANGUAGE ON THIS ISSUE ON WHICH WE ALL COULD AGREE. REGRETTABLY THAT DIDN'T HAPPEN.

IRONICALLY, I DON'T THINK THERE IS MUCH DIFFERENCE AMONG US ON THE BASIC FOREIGN POLICY ISSUE OF DEALING WITH THE PLO, OR ON WHETHER OR NOT WE SHOULD BE TALKING TO OUT-AND-OUT TERRORISTS.

EVERYONE, OR NEARLY EVERYONE, AGREES THAT IT WOULD NOT BE IN THE INTEREST OF THE UNITED STATES TO UNILATERALLY AND ABRUPTLY TERMINATE THE CONTACTS WE HAVE UNDERTAKEN WITH THE PLO AT THIS POINT. EVERYONE, OR NEARLY EVERYONE, AGREES THAT IT IS NOT RIGHT FOR OUR REPRESENTATIVES TO BE NEGOTIATING WITH OUT-AND-OUT TERRORISTS, WITH THE BLOOD OF AMERICANS ON THEIR HANDS.

I'M CONFIDENT THE PRESIDENT AGREES WITH THOSE PROPOSITIONS. I CERTAINLY DO. AND I THINK EVERY SENATOR I'VE DEALT WITH ON THIS ISSUE OVER THE PAST SEVERAL DAYS FEELS THAT WAY, TOO. SO THESE ARE NOT THE QUESTIONS WHICH LED US TO AN IMPASSE THAT WE ARE TRYING TO END WITH THIS TABLING MOTION.

THE PROBLEM IS THE STRONGLY HELD VIEW OF THE PRESIDENT AND OTHERS IN THE ADMINISTRATION THAT THE PENDING AMENDMENT -- WHATEVER ITS INTENT -- IN PRACTICE WOULD RELEGATE THE CURRENT DIALOGUE WITH THE PLO TO THE TRASHCAN. AND THE VIEW, EQUALLY STRONGLY HELD IN THE ADMINISTRATION, THAT THE LANGUAGE IN THIS AMENDMENT WOULD SET TOTALLY UNACCEPTABLE LIMITS ON THE PRESIDENT'S FLEXIBILITY IN HANDLING THIS EXTRAORDINARILY COMPLEX ISSUE.

INDEED, WE HAVE A LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT -- WHICH THE MAJORITY LEADER HAS PUT IN THE RECORD -- WHICH MAKES THESE POINTS. AND I CAN ASSURE THE SENATE THAT SECRETARY BAKER, AND JOHN SUNUNU, AND BRENT SCOWCROFT HAVE MADE THESE SAME POINTS IN LESS DIPLOMATIC LANGUAGE PERSONALLY TO ME AND OTHER SENATORS OVER THE PAST SEVERAL DAYS.

(MORE)

I HAPPEN TO SHARE THE PRESIDENT'S VIEW ON THESE POINTS. I WAS ONE WHO HAD SOME RESERVATIONS ABOUT THE DECISION TO RENEW CONTACTS WITH THE PLO LAST YEAR. BUT IT IS ABSOLUTELY CLEAR THAT, HAVING DONE THAT, AND IN THE WAKE OF OTHER DEVELOPMENTS IN THE MIDDLE EAST -- INCLUDING SHAMIR'S ORIGINAL ELECTION PROPOSAL -- IT WOULD BE VERY DESTRUCTIVE OF OUR INTERESTS TO PULL THE PLUG ON OUR CONTACTS.

IT IS ALSO CLEAR TO ME THAT WE SHOULD NOT HAMSTRING THE PRESIDENT, AS HE TRIES TO DEAL WITH ALL OF THE POLITICAL "LAND MINES" IN THE MIDDLE EAST -- BY FORCING HIM TO TROT UP HERE AND JUSTIFY EACH AND EVERY CONTACT HE HAS WITH EVERY REPRESENTATIVE OF THE PLO.

IN MY VIEW, THE LANGUAGE IN THE PENDING AMENDMENT WOULD HAVE THOSE EFFECTS. IN MY VIEW, THE LANGUAGE THAT THE MAJORITY LEADER AND I AND OTHERS WILL OFFER LATER WILL NOT.

THAT'S THE DIFFERENCE. IT'S NOT REALLY A DIFFERENCE ON GOALS IN THE MIDDLE EAST. BUT IT IS A BIG, BIG DIFFERENCE -- GOING TO THE HEART OF THE PRESIDENT'S POWERS, AND GOING TO A FUNDAMENTALLY DIFFERENT JUDGMENT ON WILL HAPPEN TO THE PLO DIALOGUE SHOULD WE PASS THIS AMENDMENT.

I HAVE ALREADY INDICATED HOW PERSONALLY ENGAGED THE PRESIDENT, SECRETARY BAKER, JOHN SUNUNU AND GENERAL SCOWCROFT HAVE BEEN ON THIS ISSUE.

I WANT TO THANK, TOO, THE DISTINGUISHED MAJORITY LEADER FOR HIS LEADERSHIP, PATIENCE AND PERSEVERANCE. AND I WANT TO THANK SENATORS BOSCHWITZ AND METZENBAUM, WHO WERE MORE INTERESTED IN SEEING THAT AMERICA SPEAKS WITH ONE STRONG VOICE ON THESE IMPORTANT ISSUES, THAN IN TRYING TO PRESERVE THEIR EQUITY IN EVERY ADJECTIVE, ADVERB AND COMMA IN THE VARIOUS DRAFTS WE HAVE WORKED ON.

MR. PRESIDENT: THE QUESTIONS AS I HAVE OUTLINED THEM ARE RATHER CLEARLY DRAWN. I THINK THE PRESIDENT IS RIGHT, AND THAT WE OUGHT TO TABLE THIS AMENDMENT.

I HOPE ALL SENATORS WILL VOTE TO TABLE, AND THEN WILL JOIN THE MAJORITY LEADER AND I IN SUPPORTING THE ALTERNATE LANGUAGE THAT WE OFFER.

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