

Bob Dole



NEWS

U. S. SENATOR FOR KANSAS

FROM:

SENATE REPUBLICAN LEADER

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CONTACT: CLARKSON HINE
(202) 224-5358

U.S. AT A CROSSROADS IN FOREIGN POLICY
DOLE URGES PRESIDENT CLINTON TO AVOID QUAGMIRES:
DISENGAGE FROM SOMALIA AND LEAD NEW DIPLOMATIC AND
MILITARY APPROACH TO WAR IN BOSNIA-HERCEGOVINA

Washington -- The following is the text of a letter sent to President Clinton by Senate Republican Leader Bob Dole urging that the Administration reconsider current U.S. policy towards Somalia and Bosnia-Herzegovina:

August 31, 1993

The President
The White House
Washington, D.C.

Dear Mr. President:

The United States is at a crossroads in its foreign policy. The policy priorities this administration sets and the decisions it will make in the months ahead will have tremendous consequences for years to come. In this regard, I am deeply concerned that the weight of U.S. leadership is being brought to bear in an area where the United States does not have a national interest, at the expense of an area where U.S. interests are at stake. I am troubled by the administration's increasing focus on Somalia -- where the humanitarian crisis is nearing an end -- and lack of initiative toward the situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina where American leadership is sorely needed to guide the international community toward a principled and feasible solution to the war in Bosnia.

While I have supported the humanitarian mission in Somalia, I cannot see the need for America to continue a lead role in the new mission of "nation-building." The tasks of pacification and rebuilding the Somali state, while worthy initiatives, can be achieved without U.S. leadership. The pursuit of Somali warlords does not require the resources of the world's only superpower. It is time for America to disengage and turn over the reins to the United Nations and to African countries who have a clear stake in the stability of the area. In contrast to Somalia, what is at stake in Bosnia is more than just Bosnia -- it is the future of the international order. As the United States and the United Nations engage in "nation-building" in Somalia, the United Nations and the European Community are papering over the destruction of the Bosnian state.

At your press conference yesterday, you reiterated your commitment to have U.S. ground troops participate in implementing a Bosnian settlement that is fair, acceptable to the Bosnian government and that is enforceable. Clearly the present Owen/Stoltenberg plan does not meet your criteria. More significantly, the proposed partition of Bosnia would create a dangerous precedent and invite aggression in other areas of the world. However, the mediators seem to have only one objective: to bring the talks to an end regardless of whether an agreement is principled, fair or workable. And ironically, they are pressuring the Bosnian government to accept this flawed and unprincipled plan using the U.S. commitment to provide ground troops as leverage.

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In view of the fact that the Owen/Stoltenberg plan is essentially a vehicle for the surrender of most of Bosnia's territory to aggressor forces, would lead to the creation of a string of Muslim refugee camps, and would require a substantial commitment of ground troops and other resources for the foreseeable future, I would strongly urge the administration to publicly oppose the plan. Moreover, I would urge that you take this opportunity to call for an immediate pause in the negotiations and to personally host a meeting in Washington of NATO heads of state to establish a new diplomatic and military framework for addressing this conflict. It seems to me that your criteria, as well as the critical objective of maintaining the integrity of international laws and institutions, could be best achieved if some version of your 'lift and strike' option (which would not involve the deployment of U.S. ground troops) were to be immediately adopted.

The difficulties associated with a new policy approach toward Bosnia and a disengagement from Somalia are essentially political. The United States would have to reassert its leadership vis-a-vis some of our European allies, as well as the United Nations and the U.N. Secretary General. On the other hand, this approach would prevent the United States from being dragged into quagmire -- in either Bosnia-Herzegovina or Somalia -- where the costs would not only be in dollars, but in lives.

Mr. President, I urge you to reconsider the current policies toward Somalia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. I believe that the recommendations I have made are consistent with our national interest in that U.S. leadership would be used to uphold the international order, and would minimize risks to our military personnel, as well as minimize the expenditure of U.S. resources. I also believe that the Congress could support such a reordering of foreign policy priorities, and I would like to offer my assistance to you in building Congressional support should you come to such a decision.

Sincerely,

BOB DOLE
United States Senate