

Bob Dole



NEWS

U.S. SENATOR FOR KANSAS

FROM:

SENATE REPUBLICAN LEADER

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CONTACT: CLARKSON HINE
(202) 224-5358

SOMALIA & RUSSIA

TIME FOR BLUEPRINT FOR U.S. EXIT FROM SOMALIA;
GAP BETWEEN U.S. INTERESTS & U.N. OPERATIONS WIDENS;
U.S. HAS VITAL NATIONAL INTEREST IN FUTURE OF RUSSIA

We have just learned that the American loss of life in Somalia this weekend was far worse than initially reported: at least 12 American servicemen were killed, several are "missing in action," and dozens of Americans have been wounded. Early reports indicate that some U.S. forces may be held hostage. These casualties are above and beyond a mine incident which killed one Somali-American and wounded three more American servicemen this past weekend. As the body bags pile up in Mogadishu, the confusion over U.S. objectives increases.

U.N. Secretary General Boutros-Ghali has once again attempted to "veto" a U.S. effort to find a political resolution and set limits on U.S. armed forces. I think it's high time for Boutros-Ghali to recognize that we will decide what is in the American interest and that he is not empowered to make U.S. foreign policy.

U.S. Interests & U.N. Operations: The Gap Grows

The gap between U.S. interests and U.N. operations is great and growing in Somalia. The U.N. is obsessed with getting Aideed, and Boutros-Ghali seems to think the U.S. is required to put its military muscle behind this effort. But, let's be clear, U.N. Security Council Resolution 814 only "authorizes" efforts to capture those responsible for attacks in the U.N. -- it does not bind the United States, regardless of what Boutros-Ghali thinks. This Administration needs to remind Boutros-Ghali that he works for the Security Council -- not the reverse.

Already there are voices saying that if U.S. forces leave Somalia, civil war, chaos, and famine will result. That is exactly what is wrong with getting involved in nation-building in Somalia in the first place. What if the Nigerians, or the Indians, or the Pakistanis do not provide forces? Will Americans have to stay forever to prevent famine or civil war? If Somalia is that fragile, I am not sure anyone can build a "nation" there in the near future. Certainly, it should not be the job of the U.S. armed forces -- especially when the majority in Congress and the Administration are working together to slash the defense budget. In this time of limited defense resources, we should put a priority on protecting and promoting U.S. interests and meeting the threats to U.S. security.

The same week that President Clinton received good press for telling the U.N. "to say no" to peacekeeping, U.N. operations were started or extended in Haiti, Angola, Georgia, Somalia and Liberia. The United States cannot and should not be involved in all of these places. So, Boutros-Ghali should keep that in mind when making U.N. commitments.

Vital National Interest in Russia

There has been fighting on the streets of Moscow. Yeltsin has won the short-term struggle and the forces in parliament have surrendered, but instability in Russia is not over. America has a vital national interest in the future of Russia. We have no comparable interest in Somalia. Enough Americans have died. We cannot indefinitely continue to support Boutros-Ghali's plans in Somalia.

When the Administration issues its report on U.S. operations in Somalia next week, I hope it will include a blueprint for how and when the U.S. leaves Somalia for good.

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Remarks delivered on Senate floor, approximately 1:00 PM EDT.