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NEWS

U.S. SENATOR FOR KANSAS

FROM:

SENATE MAJORITY LEADER

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BOSNIA UPDATE

RAPID REACTION FORCE WILL NOT CHANGE WAY UNPROFOR DOES BUSINESS; TIME FOR U.S. TO CUT LOSSES, NOT CONTINUE FAILED INVESTMENT

There's more bad news on the Bosnia front.

First, word leaked out of a letter from Boutros Boutros-Ghali's special envoy, Yasushi Akashi, to Radovan Karadzic, the Bosnian Serbs' militant leader, intended to "assure" the Bosnian Serbs that despite the deployment of the European Rapid Reaction Force (RRF), the U.N. would continue business as usual in Bosnia.

Despite RRF Deployment, U.N. Continues Business As Usual

I have obtained a copy of that letter. I would note that the letter is addressed to "H.E. Dr. Radovan Karadzic" the "H.E." Stands for "His Excellency" -- a term usually reserved for dignitaries and government officials, not alleged war criminals.

The letter reads, and I quote, "I wish to assure you that these theatre reserve forces will operate under the existing United Nations peace-keeping rules of engagement and will not in any way change the essential peace-keeping nature of the UNPROFOR mission. While the reserves will enhance UNPROFOR's security, the understanding and cooperation of the parties themselves will be the best guarantor of the Force's continued effectiveness as an impartial force. The United Nations, troop contributing states and the Security Council have all recognized that the reserve force cannot and will not be a substitute for a political process aimed at an overall peaceful settlement of the Bosnian conflict."

Once again, Yasushi Akashi did what he does best as the United Nations' appeaser on the front lines: delivers good news to the Serbs, and bad news to the Bosnians.

This morning, we read that the French held secret negotiations with the Serbs -- in Pale and in the ethnically cleansed city of Zvornik. Reportedly, the French promised that in return for the release of the U.N. hostages, NATO would not conduct any further air strikes on Serb positions.

The message is crystal clear: the U.N. has abandoned its mandate of protecting the so-called safe areas and intends to continue to bend to the will of the Serbs. And, it has done so not in the Security Council through a vote, but in back rooms with Serb militants whom French President Jacques Chirac publicly called "terrorists."

When President Chirac met with Congressional leaders he called for an end to the "humiliation" of the peacekeepers. In my view, letting war criminals blackmail the leaders of the western world is humiliating -- and an absolute outrage.

This brings us to the matter of the Rapid Reaction Force, which is intended by the British and French to protect the U.N. forces in Bosnia. From these reports it is obvious that the Rapid Reaction Force will not change the way UNPROFOR conducts its business. In other words, UNPROFOR will not do the job it was tasked to do by the Security Council in numerous resolutions -- whether or not the Rapid Reaction Force is deployed. In fact, the Rapid Reaction Force appears designed to protect UNPROFOR so that it can continue not doing its job.

Why Should U.S. Continue To Subsidize Failure?

And this brings us finally to the question of why the United States should subsidize the Rapid Reaction Force, let alone the entire UNPROFOR operation. We know that the taxpayers's dollars are being dumped in a big black hole because international leaders don't have the courage to do what is right and what is smart -- and that is to withdraw the U.N. forces and lift the arms embargo on Bosnia. Can we in good conscience continue to appropriate funds for such a failure?

(more)

Well, the administration appears committed to this massive multilateral mess. In today's New York Times, administration officials were cited as considering the use of funds designated for humanitarian aid to pay for a U.S. contribution of about \$100 million to the Rapid Reaction Force. While there are budgetary reasons such a shift would be difficult, Congressional opposition would likely be strong. The fact that anyone in the administration is thinking along these lines is shocking. People in Sarajevo and elsewhere in Bosnia are hungry -- they cannot eat European pride. Furthermore, virtually the only effective U.S. activity in Bosnia and Herzegovina has been the provision of emergency humanitarian assistance.

The U.N. operation in Bosnia is in a melt-down. Now is the time to cut our losses, not sink more resources into a failed investment.

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