

Bob Dole



NEWS

U.S. SENATOR FOR KANSAS

FROM:

SENATE MAJORITY LEADER

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BOSNIA UPDATE

DOLE DISAPPOINTED WITH OUTCOME OF LONDON MEETING; LIFTING ARMS EMBARGO ONLY HOPE FOR SAVING BOSNIA & U.S. CREDIBILITY

Two days ago, President Clinton called me to ask that I delay the vote on the Dole-Lieberman legislation until after the London meeting, which ended just a short while ago.

I agreed to the President's request. Unfortunately, the London meeting was a disappointment -- another dazzling display of ducking the problem. Instead of clarity and decisiveness, once again we have ambiguity and a lowest common denominator approach.

Meeting Produced No Solution, No Policy

Instead of dumping the "dual key" it has been modified. Instead of responding to the fall of Zepa and Srebrenica, these two eastern enclaves have been written off. Most egregiously, the London meeting reaffirmed the current failed U.N. operation.

In the wake of the fall of Zepa, it is hard for me to imagine that anyone still believes that the U.N. mission is viable in Bosnia -- that what we are witnessing is anything but a colossal, collective catastrophe.

Yesterday, the Bosnian presidency building was shelled while the European envoy, Carl Bildt, was meeting with the Bosnian President. But, if attacks on Sarajevo continue what will be the West's response? Another meeting. According to Secretary Christopher the focus of U.N. efforts will be to open access to the city for humanitarian aid. Yes, the Bosnian people need food. But, they also need protection.

The London meeting reportedly produced a decision to defend Gorazde through a "substantial" response -- after a serious warning is given to the Serbs. Gorazde is already under attack. How much further do the Bosnian Serbs have to go before the warning is triggered?

The Serbs are becoming more aggressive and more defiant by the hour. But, the London meeting made it clear there would be no immediate or decisive response except more meetings.

In effect what the Clinton administration and European leaders are doing is trying to manage the conflict -- to limit the war's consequences without providing a solution. Or as the Bosnian Prime Minister said without dealing with the real problem -- which is Belgrade-sponsored aggression.

Western leaders in London also called for a ceasefire and more negotiations. Well, it has been one year since the Bosnian government signed the so-called Contact Group's plan. Why should the Serbs sign now after yet another display of fecklessness.

It is crystal clear that the London meeting did not produce a solution. It did not result in a policy.

I believe that the Senate will not be fooled by administration spin doctors who will no doubt announce great results from the London meeting.

I believe that there is a substantial majority in favor of the Dole/Lieberman legislation and that the disappointing outcome of the London meeting will only serve to strengthen that support.

Dole/Lieberman Bill -- Not Cause for U.N. Withdrawal

Once again, I want to emphasize that the Dole/Lieberman legislation lifts the U.S. arms embargo after UNPROFOR withdraws. It seems to me that this point is being deliberately ignored and intentionally obfuscated by those Allied and administration officials who claim that the Dole/Lieberman legislation if passed will be responsible for a U.N. pull-out.

No doubt this is a political tactic designed to find excuses for what is the inevitable end of the U.N. mission in Bosnia.

(more)

It may not be today or tomorrow, but this operation will end as a consequence of its own failure. If only administration and allied officials would spend as much time designing a new policy as they do designing new excuses for their inability to develop an effective and principled policy. The bottom line is that passage of the Dole/Lieberman bill may be an excuse for U.N. withdrawal, but it will not be a cause.

Present Approach Is Inhumane

The dire administration predictions of humanitarian disaster have come true -- but not because of lifting the arms embargo, but because of a lack of American leadership and a willingness to go along with failure in the name of consensus. Despite the paternalistic assertions made by administration officials that they have the best interests of the Bosnians at heart, the present approach is not humanitarian, it is inhumane. First, the Bosnians were corralled into giant refugee camps, then disarmed, and then left unprotected.

President Clinton's U.S. Troop Commitment

With respect to the assertion that this legislation would give the Bosnian President the right to send 25,000 U.S. troops to Bosnia I would make three points: (1) The commitment to send 25,000 U.S. troops to Bosnia for either a withdrawal or to police a settlement is a commitment that was made by President Clinton - - and not pursuant to any request by the Bosnian government or the result of any congressional action. (2) The days of colonialism are over. The Bosnian government is a sovereign government and has the right to tell the British, French, Dutch and other forces if and when it wants them to leave. (3) President Clinton has yet to make his case to the Congress that 25,000 troops are needed for such a withdrawal. Let us not forget that the Dutch troops in Srebrenica negotiated their departure with the Serbs -- they were not rescued by U.S. Marines.

Belated NATO Response Not Substitute For Policy

Finally, I would like to say that a belated NATO response to the brutal Serb onslaught in the eastern enclaves is not a substitute for a policy. The U.N. operation is a failure. That is a fact. And no amount of reshuffling will change that fact.

Neither band-aids, nor reconstructive surgery will save the U.N. operation in Bosnia. Lifting the arms embargo and letting the Bosnians defend themselves is the only policy option which has any hope of saving them -- and saving U.S. credibility.

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* Remarks delivered on Senate floor, approximately 3:45 p.m.