

Bob Dole

U.S. SENATOR FOR KANSAS



NEWS

FROM:

SENATE REPUBLICAN LEADER

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Contact: Clarkson Hine
(202) 224-5358

BOSNIA UPDATE

ADMINISTRATION HAS YET TO MAKE CASE FOR U.S. GROUND TROOPS; MANY QUESTIONS REMAIN; DOLE URGES ADMINISTRATION TO SEEK CONGRESSIONAL AUTHORIZATION

This week the Senate and the House began conducting hearings on the potential deployment of American ground forces to Bosnia and Herzegovina in the event a peace agreement is reached. This is the beginning of a very important process of Congressional review and debate. I am pleased that the administration sent the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Defense, and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff to testify on behalf of the administration's proposal.

Many Unanswered Questions About Proposed Operation

Any decision to send American forces into harm's way requires the utmost consideration. American interests may justify sending Americans into Bosnia, but the goals must be clear and the risks must be understood and weighed carefully.

Unfortunately, the administration has not yet made the case for its proposed operation. Many questions remain unanswered and many answers remain ambiguous.

The first task must be to persuade the Congress that this is the best option of the options available. And let me be clear, there are other options.

For over three years now, I have called for American leadership. For over three years now, I have called for NATO involvement. But, I am not convinced that exercising U.S. leadership and deploying NATO ground forces in support of a peace agreement that partitions Bosnia is the best or only option.

We need to know: will American forces be the guarantors of ethnic cleansing? Will they be used to prevent Muslim refugees from returning to their homes in what becomes the Bosnian Serb Republic?

With respect to the peace settlement, the administration must be able to ensure that any peace reached is a stable and sustainable peace -- that there are defensible borders; that the Bosnian government structure is viable; that this is not just the first step toward a greater Serbia.

If there is a genuine peace, there is a real question why tens of thousands of peacekeepers, including Americans, are needed? Moreover, how did the administration come up with the number 25,000 for the American ground force contribution? Is this solely the result of President Clinton's speech two years ago or is there a military rationale for it?

There is a lot of confusion as to what NATO's role will be. Will NATO ensure the territorial integrity of Bosnia? Who will accomplish the tasks that NATO does not wish to be involved in, such as facilitating the return of refugees, the conduct of free and fair elections, humanitarian operations?

What will this operation cost? What factors are current cost estimates based on? How does the administration plan to pay for such an operation? Was Secretary Perry serious when he said that the administration would take funds from missile defense programs -- intended to protect Americans from the growing threat of missile defenses -- for peacekeeping?

What are the criteria for success of this operation? What is the exit strategy? How do we ensure that the Bosnians can defend themselves once peacekeepers leave? Who will arm and/or train the Bosnians?

Lift Arms Embargo on Bosnian Government

It seems to me that developments in recent months have vindicated the overwhelming majority in Congress who argued that the Bosnians and the Croats were capable of defending themselves if armed. It has also demonstrated that NATO air power can be used effectively and that Bosnian Serb forces are not invincible. The military balance began shifting in Bosnia, but I am not sure

(more)

that it has stabilized. In my view, lifting the arms embargo on Bosnia is as relevant in a post-settlement situation as it is now. This matter cannot be avoided and must be resolved as part of any peace settlement.

The bottom line is that Congress is not yet in possession of the facts. Indeed, the administration is not in possession of the facts. There is no settlement yet. But, with that in mind, we must make sure that we do not deploy any forces without clear answers to these critical questions. I am deeply concerned that since current NATO plans call for initial deployments within a few days of a settlement being signed that we may not have all the answers -- and that the administration will go ahead and deploy forces and try to figure out what they will be doing after they are already on the ground.

Urging Congressional Authorization

In view of these many unanswered questions -- and those I have raised are by no means all-inclusive -- I would strongly urge the administration to cooperate with the Congress and provide us with the information we need to make an informed judgment.

Furthermore, I would strongly urge the administration to seek congressional authorization for any deployment of U.S. ground forces to Bosnia. This was my view prior to the Gulf War, and it is now. It is essential that the American people are behind any undertaking that places thousands of our soldiers in a dangerous environment for a prolonged period of time.

Diplomatic Talks Should Address Kosova's Status

Let me also express my deep concern about other aspects of the diplomatic process and the talks that are due to begin on August 31 in Dayton, Ohio. The agenda does not include Kosova which has been under martial law for over six years now. This is not just a matter of human rights, but a question of Kosova's status. Even in the former Yugoslavia, Kosova had autonomous status -- the people and their assembly could make their own decisions. Today, the two million Albanians there are under an apartheid-like system -- a large majority terrorized and oppressed by a small minority.

Don't Let Milosevic Off the Hook & Don't Issue Visa

We cannot let Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic off the hook for Kosova, or for his continued support of paramilitary forces which are reported today to have slaughtered hundreds of Muslim men and boys in northern Bosnia. Milosevic is no peacemaker, rather the mastermind behind ethnic cleansing, oppression and aggression in the former Yugoslavia. As early as 1992, senior U.S. government officials accused him of war crimes.

But today, he has been invited by this administration to the United States to participate in peace talks. I believe that this was a serious error in judgment which calls into question the administration's commitment to the prosecution of war criminals in the former Yugoslavia. Sure, Milosevic has not yet been indicted by the war crimes tribunal. But, there is no doubt that he has given support and safe haven to some of the most notorious war criminals. Slobodan Milosevic should not be issued a visa. But if the administration insists on this, at the very least, it should ensure that any visa issued to Milosevic confines him to Wright Patterson Air Force Base. He does not deserve to be treated like other foreign dignitaries.

Finally, there should be no comprehensive sanctions relief on Serbia until there is a satisfactory resolution of the situation in Kosova. Unless there is a comprehensive settlement including Kosova, there will be no stability in the region -- one of the key objectives presently being cited by the administration. The sanctions on Serbia are the only leverage the U.S. and the international community have been willing to use on the Belgrade regime.

I hope that the administration will address my concerns and those of my colleagues, and cooperate with the Congress so that together we can determine what is in the best interest of the United States.

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* Remarks delivered on Senate floor approximately 1:50 p.m.