

Bob Dole



NEWS

U. S. SENATOR FOR KANSAS

FROM:

SENATE REPUBLICAN LEADER

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BOSNIA & U.S. TROOPS

**REALITY IS PRESIDENT IS SENDING U.S. FORCES TO BOSNIA;
DOLE WORKING ON RESOLUTION TO SUPPORT AMERICAN TROOPS,
HELP REDUCE RISKS & ENSURE SUCCESSFUL MISSION;
ARMING & TRAINING BOSNIANS IS ONLY REALISTIC EXIT STRATEGY**

The entire nation has its attention on the deployment of U.S. forces to Bosnia. Congressional hearings on the peace agreement began this week. The President receives the NATO troop deployment plan for the implementation force today. Many of my colleagues have made statements on the issue. I have long urged that we lift the arms embargo on Bosnia to let the Bosnians defend themselves. This would have been the best option -- for Bosnia and for the United States. It would have been the legally, morally and strategically correct approach. Lifting the arms embargo would also have been the best way to avoid sending U.S. troops to Bosnia.

The record should be clear: we are where we are today because the President repeatedly rejected Congress' bipartisan effort to lift the embargo.

Time for Reality Check in Congress

We should also be clear at this end of Pennsylvania Avenue. It is time for a reality check in the Congress. The fact is that President Clinton has decided to send U.S. forces to Bosnia. The fact is that these troops will be sent -- and indeed, some are already there. The fact is that by next week, there will be a couple of thousand American soldiers on the ground in Bosnia.

The President has the constitutional power as the Commander-in-Chief to send these forces. The Congress cannot stop this troop deployment from happening. The President and his senior advisers have repeatedly said they will proceed with the deployment whatever the Congress does. If we would try to cut-off funds we would harm the men and women in the military who have already begun to arrive in Bosnia.

We should find a way, if possible, to support the American men and women in uniform on their way to Bosnia.

Concerns About Deployment

Like all Americans, I have real concerns about this operation. First, I am concerned about the possibility of American casualties. The men and women of our armed forces are volunteers, but that does not make their lives any less valuable than those of draftees. They know the risks, and we have an obligation to do all we can to reduce those risks. We can reduce the risk to American forces by limiting their mission to enforcing only military provisions of the peace agreement: that means no Somalia-like nation-building.

We can also reduce the threat to U.S. forces by making it crystal clear that any attack on our troops will be met with an overwhelming, rapid and decisive response. No more cumbersome command arrangements limiting the ability to retaliate -- no more United Nations second guessing or "dual key" veto authority.

The second major concern is that American forces will drawn into a quagmire with no way out. The Clinton administration has not articulated an exit strategy; setting an arbitrary date is not developing an exit strategy.

U.S. Must Have Exit Strategy So Troops Can Come Home

The President has a plan to get us into Bosnia, but no realistic plan to get us out. Keeping Bosnia defenseless is not an exit strategy. Relying on Utopian arms control schemes is not an exit strategy. Relying on un-named third parties is not an exit strategy.

The United States must have its own exit strategy, and control its own destiny -- we should not be dependent on the goodwill or actions of other nations. The only way to make sure that U.S. forces will be able to leave in a timely and honorable way is to ensure that the Bosnians are provided the means to defend themselves when we leave.

(more)

Arm & Train Bosnians

What is needed is a concrete effort, led by the United States, to arm and train the Bosnians. This effort should not be contingent on so-called build-down provisions in the Dayton agreement. I understand administration officials said this morning that the U.S. or NATO would not be involved in enabling Bosnia to defend itself. In my view, it is an abdication of responsibility to rely on unspecified third countries to create the conditions that allow withdrawal of American forces. The sooner we start to enable Bosnia to defend themselves, the sooner U.S. forces can come home.

In my view, the definition of success of this deployment must include a real end to the war -- that is only possible with the creation of a stable military balance which enables Bosnia to defend itself. Anything less simply exposes American forces to great risks in order to monitor a temporary interlude in the fighting.

Working On Resolution

Over the coming days, I will be working on a resolution that I hope the majority of my colleagues can support. We have not yet seen the final NATO implementation plan. I do not want to make a snap judgement. I hope we can fashion a resolution that offers support to our military forces, that helps to reduce the risks they face, and that ensures American forces come home as soon as possible with a successful mission accomplished.

Issue Too Important for Partisan Posturing

Before turning to my colleagues from Arizona, I would like to urge my colleagues not to make this a partisan issue. The overwhelming votes to lift the arms embargo were won with bipartisan leadership. The best foreign policy is conducted with bipartisan support. I note that the Senate votes on Lebanon and on the Gulf War were much more partisan than they should have been. Indeed, I was dismayed that not a single member of the Democratic leadership of the House or Senate supported President Bush's decision to protect American interests in Operation Desert Storm. In my view, the deployment of American forces and the best way to ensure their safe and honorable return is too important for partisan posturing. I hope we can all work together in the coming days to fashion a resolution which supports our military forces, reduces the risks they face, and brings them home as soon as possible.

The bottom line is that the President intends to send these troops to Bosnia one way or another. And so, it seems to me that we in the Congress have a responsibility to try to ensure -- to our best ability -- that as this deployment goes forward, that we create the conditions to end it quickly and successfully so that U.S. forces can return to their families.

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