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U. S. SENATOR FOR KANSAS



NEWS

FROM:

SENATE REPUBLICAN LEADER

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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BOSNIA DEBATE: HEFLEY RESOLUTION

**FUNDS CUT-OFF WOULD UNDERMINE AMERICAN TROOPS & U.S. CREDIBILITY;
CONGRESS CAN ENHANCE PROSPECTS FOR TIMELY & SAFE WITHDRAWAL
BY DEFINING CLEAR EXIT STRATEGY**

The choices before us are clear. Recognizing that this deployment is going forward we can: (1) cut off funds for this operation and our forces who are already underway; (2) loudly protest the President's decision and express our opposition; or (3) require the President to take measures that will enhance the safety of our troops and ensure that they will return quickly -- without their withdrawal leading to a resumption of hostilities.

I have given this matter considerable thought. I thought about my own personal experience during World War II, and my involvement in Congressional deliberations during the Vietnam war. I thought about the American troops spending a Christmas overseas in the mountains of Europe. I also thought about the experience of our brave war heroes like Senator John McCain who was in a Vietnamese prison while tens of thousands of Americans were marching to protest the war and Congress regularly debated cutting off funds for U.S. military operations in southeast Asia. As some may remember, the Congress spent weeks -- even months -- on debating Cooper-Church, McGovern-Hatfield, and other measures to cut funding for the war in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia.

I recall that in the spring of 1970, I led a filibuster against the Cooper-Church amendment cutting off funds for military operations in Cambodia and Laos. In that debate, I offered an amendment that would have allowed the President to waive the funding restrictions if he determined U.S. citizens were being held as prisoners of war in Cambodia by North Vietnam or the Vietcong. This amendment failed 36-54 and Cooper-Church passed, but only after withdrawal had begun.

Wrong to Cut Off Funds for Troops

While I understand opposition to and disagreement with the President's decision to send American ground forces to Bosnia, I believe that action to cut off funds for this deployment is wrong. It is wrong because it makes our brave young men and women bear the brunt of a decision made, not by them, but by the Commander-in-Chief.

I will vote against H.R.2606, sponsored by Representative Hefley, which was passed by the House last month. H.R. 2606, prohibits any use of Department of Defense funds for the deployment of U.S. armed forces on the ground in Bosnia participating in the NATO implementation force -- unless such funds have been specifically appropriated by subsequent law. There has been no appropriation for this operation, so the effect would be to cut off funds to our troops who are on the way or already in Bosnia. I do not believe we should limit the funds for food, supplies and ammunition for our troops. It was wrong during Vietnam, and it is wrong now.

I believe that passing the Hefley resolution would undermine our troops, as well as our credibility.

Congress Must Define Exit Strategy

I believe that even at this late date, the Congress can play a constructive role -- supporting the troops by enhancing their prospects for a timely and safe withdrawal, and ensuring that there is a military balance upon the departure of our forces.

President Clinton does not have an exit strategy for our troops. Let's be clear: a date is not an exit strategy. In my view it would be irresponsible to send thousands of American forces in, without a concrete plan to bring them out.

Furthermore, we need to do what we can to make certain that the sacrifices being made now -- by our men and women in uniform, by the U.S. taxpayer -- are not for naught. It would be inexcusable to undertake this immense endeavor, only to leave Bosnia, a year later, in the same situation it is in now -- virtually defenseless and at the mercy of its bigger and stronger neighbors.

Later today, we will have an opportunity to vote on the Hutchison-Inhofe and Dole-McCain resolutions. Now, we should speak decisively in support of our troops and defeat H.R. 2606.

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