

Bob Dole



NEWS

U.S. SENATOR FOR KANSAS

FROM:

SENATE MAJORITY LEADER

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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BOSNIA VISIT

DOLE REGRETS HE WILL NOT MAKE HOLIDAY VISIT TO AMERICAN TROOPS

WASHINGTON -- Senate Majority Leader Bob Dole today issued the following statement:

"It had been my intention to travel to Bosnia and Hungary to spend Christmas with our men and women in uniform. Senators Cochran, Stevens, Kempthorne, and I wanted to show support for our troops with a visit during the holidays. Yesterday, the Secretary of Defense raised a number of objections to the visit in a meeting with me -- which he followed up this morning with a letter restating these objections. I regret that we will not be making this trip."

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Secretary Perry's letter attached:

Dear Mr. Leader:

I very much appreciate your taking the time yesterday to meet with me to discuss your desire to visit our military forces who are deploying into Bosnia. I wanted to take the opportunity to follow up on our meeting to reaffirm some of the concerns which I expressed to you about the timing of your trip.

As I indicated yesterday, we very much want to support Members of Congress visiting the troops to show their support for our men and women in uniform, but we are asking Members' understanding and acceptance of the need to delay those visits until they can be accomplished without impacting the completion of their initial mission. Despite the difficulties associated with the severe weather in the area and the lack of a transportation infrastructure, our planned deployment is progressing. However, at this point the full effort of our personnel, both in Bosnia, and at the staging bases in other locations, is focused on accomplishing the deployment. Our commanders in-theater have requested our assistance and yours, as well as that of your colleagues, in limiting high level visits to the area until the deployment is essentially complete. As I indicated to you, both General Shalikashvili and I have delayed our planned visits to accommodate this request. Additionally, we have recommended to the President that he not plan a visit to the troops at this time in accordance with this request.

It is General Joulwan's assessment, reaffirmed in a message received last night, that barring unforeseen circumstances the theater personnel should be able to accommodate high level visits by the middle of January. When we achieve that capability, we stand ready to work with the Congress to support their visits to our personnel.

Sincerely,

William J. Perry