

SENATOR PAUL E. TSONGAS
STATEMENT FOR THE RECORD
AUGUST 20, 1982

Frank - Don't release
until you hear
from me. (MHT)

Mr. President, it is time for the U.S. Senate to state clearly and concisely, what should have been said long ago — the United States should come to the aid of the Afghan freedom fighters. I am introducing a resolution today calling for American material assistance to the Afghan *resistance.*

Mr. President, the war in Afghanistan will be three years in the fighting this December. I remember reading about the Soviet invasion in December, 1979, and my thoughts then ranged from outrage at the Soviets to pity for the freedom fighters.

How could a divided and ill-equipped collection of tribal militias stand up against the Soviet war machine? Twentieth century technology arrayed against a feudal society. Some 32 months later, my outrage remains but the pity disappeared long ago.

The freedom fighters of Afghanistan are very real, very effective, and very independent. They have accomplished the improbable, they have confounded the skeptics. They have achieved a military stalemate in Afghanistan.

I spoke in this chamber once before on this issue, and I said then that this war marked a turning point for the Soviets in the Third World. I said that we should exploit Soviet vulnerabilities raised by their shocking behavior in Afghanistan. I stopped short of recommending American military assistance to the freedom fighters. I was concerned that our aid might disturb the delicate political arrangements among the Afghan nationalists.

I feared unfavorable repercussions in Pakistan.

Those concerns are no longer an obstacle. The freedom fighters of Afghanistan are an untainted, well established movement with eloquent external representatives and a growing measure of internal coherence. American military aid would now be a welcome and productive addition to their struggle if they so request.

As for Pakistan, the United States has launched a major military assistance program there, and General Zia's government has proved more resilient than most observers had hoped.

This is not to say that American aid to the Afghan nationalists would be without a price. There may well be repercussions. But, I strongly believe that we can no longer ignore these requests for material assistance. The causes of the Afghan resistance is a universal one, wedded closely to our own national principles and ideals. It has struggled to attain recognition and world stature. It lives on now more strongly than ever. We can no longer ignore it or deny it.

American military assistance to a resistance movement is not a traditional subject of open Senate discussion. I recognize, as do my colleagues, how sensitive such an issue can be. This resolution, which I am introducing today, sets out the principle that American material assistance should be provided in militarily significant quantities if the Afghan freedom fighters so request. There is no implicit or explicit language selecting either covert or overt means. Nor does the resolution prescribe the specific types or quantities of such assistance. Clearly, this resolution is to convey to the Administration that there is substantial sentiment in this chamber for a program of American material support. The modalities of such a program are the responsibility of the executive branch and I have no desire to augment Congressional oversight of this very sensitive decision.

Finally, Mr. President, I want to express my appreciation to the many Americans who so actively and tirelessly work for the freedom of Afghanistan. Several groups and individuals have helped draft this resolution, and I want to recognize them: Andrew L. Eiva, President of Free Afghanistan Alliance; his colleagues, Louis Dupree, Marek Laas, Eden Naby, Charles Brockunier, and Ambassador Theodore Elliott, the Committee to Free Afghanistan, and many others too numerous to mention.

Mr. President, I request unanimous consent that the resolution be printed in the Record at the conclusion of my remarks.