

Senators Appeal to Hanoi Not to Try U.S. Airmen

BY TOM LAMBERT
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WASHINGTON — Eighteen

Democratic senators, known as opponents of this country's Vietnam policy, appealed urgently to the North Vietnamese government Friday to forgo any "vengeance" trials of captured American airmen. Sen. Robert F. Kennedy (D-N.Y.) led at once with the 18 in a statement saying North Vietnam has "no justification or excuse for persons' reprisal" against the prisoners. "Any trials or executions would be an intolerable act," he said. The 18 senators, led by Frank Church (D-Idaho) warned North Vietnam that trials and execution of any of the captive airmen "would incite a public demand for retaliation, swift and sure."

Argument Against Deaths

Further, they continued, any executions "would drastically reduce the influence of all those in the United States who have tried to curtail the fighting."

Capitol Hill sources said the senators appealed to North Vietnam in the hope their entreaty as well as known critics of the administration's Vietnam war policy ("Doves," in other words) would have more effect in Hanoi than a plea from, say, Defense Secretary Robert S. McNamara or Secretary of State Dean Rusk.

The 18 senators, in fact, called Hanoi's attention to their Vietnam war opposition record, saying "in the past we have worked for an honorable settlement of this tragic

country and keep open the path of moderation that could lead to a negotiated peace."

Kennedy also reminded Hanoi that he had dissented "at many points" with the administration's war policy.

But "regardless of one's opinion of the war," he went on, "there is no justification or excuse for personal reprisal against the pilots who only were doing their duty for their country."