

ARMS PANEL VOTES A M'NAMARA CURB

5/26/66
House Unit Calls for a Veto
in Congress on Closing of
Military Installations

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WASHINGTON, May 25 —

The House Armed Services Committee voted today to curb drastically Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara's authority to shut down military bases.

The committee approved with virtually no changes the Administration's request for military construction projects costing \$1.9 billion.

But it included in its authorization a requirement that would give either House or Senate a veto over any future base closings.

Representative L. Mendel Rivers, Democrat of South Carolina and chairman of the committee, introduced the proposal on the House floor with this comment:

"I believe this provision returns to Congress the power which the framers of the Constitution originally provided it."

Mr. Rivers referred to the responsibility of Congress under the Constitution to raise and support the armed forces.

No McNamara Comment

Secretary McNamara withheld comment on the committee's action until he had a chance to study its language. But he is expected to enter vigorous objections.

If passed in the House and approved by the Senate, the proposal would confront the President with the alternatives of vetoing the military construction authorization bill or accepting a serious infringement on the Administration's practices.

Secretary McNamara, under the Kennedy and Johnson Administrations, has shut down or reduced operations, on economy grounds, at 669 military bases. Usually the closings have been made over the vigorous protests of members of Congress

whose districts were affected.

One of the important practices employed by Mr. McNamara has been to withhold even from Congress the identity of the installations facing closure.

Mr. Rivers introduced as a provision of the military con-

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struction bill today a requirement that Congress be notified in advance.

The bill as prepared by the committee provides that the Secretary of Defense or the Secretary of a military department must report a proposed closing to the Armed Services Committees of the House and Senate.

Either of the committees would then have 30 days to register disapproval and, in turn, the House or Senate could act within 40 days to block a closing altogether.

The bill authorizes \$1,934,937,000, mostly for new military construction but including sums needed to make up for past obligations. Appropriations are voted separately by Congress.

Today's actions were taken merely on the committee version of the bill.

A move within the committee to slow down or block altogether past orders closing military bases, including the New York Naval Shipyard in Brooklyn, was defeated 20 to 13.

The move came in an amendment to the bill proposed by Representative Otis G. Pike, Democrat of Suffolk.

It would have permitted a Congressional veto over the closing of any military installation that had received Federal funds in the last five years.

The committee also defeated an effort to block its restriction on the Secretary's future base closing plans. This action came after Representative Lucien N. Nedzi, Democrat of Michigan, predicted that "if this becomes law, there will never be another base closed."

It was reported after the committee meeting that the Nedzi amendment had been defeated 30 to 3.

amendments to the Fair Labor Standards Act.

The act sets a minimum