

Raid on POW Camp

From News Dispatches

Critics of the administration clashed with its supporters in the Congress yesterday over whether the unsuccessful American raid on a North Vietnamese prisoner-of-war camp betrayed an intelligence failure and jeopardized the lives of American prisoners.

Senate Democratic Leader Mike Mansfield (Mont.) questioned "the reliability of our intelligence" in a raid on a camp that had been vacated for several weeks. He and Sen. George D. Aiken of Vermont, ranking Republican on the Foreign Relations Committee, expressed concern for the safety of Americans still held prisoner by North Vietnam.

Sen. Charles H. Percy (R-Ill.) also said he was "disturbed our intelligence was not accurate" and termed the raid a dangerous military escalation of the war.

Senate GOP leader Hugh Scott and House GOP whip Leslie Arends attacked critics

of the raid. "All the doves immediately fluttered their feathers and took a nose dive at the President," said Scott. "I wonder what they would be saying had several hundred American prisoners have been found and released," said Arends.

Sen. Edmund S. Muskie (D-Maine) said a repetition of the prison camp raid would be "risking an escalation of the war."

On the Senate floor, Muskie said compassion for the prisoners, and opposition to the practices of the North Vietnamese, "should not blind us to the follies of the administration's latest military adventure."

"I am troubled . . . that even a success in this instance would still have been a failure for hundreds of other prisoners," he said, because it further disrupts chances for a negotiated settlement that would free all the prisoners.

In an exchange with Muskie,

Sen. Robert Dole (R-Kan.) defended the raid, saying Americans are dying in North Vietnamese prison camps, and the United States cannot wait indefinitely for negotiations to make some progress.

"It was a bold effort by courageous men who would do it again—and I hope they do," Dole said.

"How many men must die in prison camps, how many women must be told they're widows, how many children must be told they're fatherless, before we make some response?" Dole asked in the Senate.

He said if new opportunities for rescue attempts should occur, the United States should take them.

"That doesn't mean any enlargement of the war," he said. Dole said he had talked earlier with three women whose husbands are prisoners of war, and "I'm willing to accept their statement that 'it's better to have my husband die

Stirs Heated Debate in Senate

in a rescue attempt than rot to death in a prison camp."

"We're not talking about an effective way of bringing American prisoners of war back when we disagree about this venture," Muskie said. ". . . If we're going to respond to all our frustrations about the war. . . by encouraging such military efforts as this one, (what) we're doing is embarking upon a military course that can escalate the whole war."

Muskie asked whether, if the mission was in fact a symbolic demonstration of American concern, "did we in the process incur risks which run counter to the objective of bringing them home?"

In a Senate speech, Mansfield said: "I admire the courage of the commandos. . . . It was a bold stroke. But I raise questions as to the reliability of our intelligence."

Alken urged both the Senate and the administration to exercise restraint in their dis-

cussion of the new events but he questioned Mr. Nixon's failure to consult key members of Congress prior to his actions.

"No President in these times can ever hope to fashion foreign policy in the inner sanctum of the White House without risking grave repercussions at home and aboard," the senior Senate Republican said in a speech.

Mansfield said it would have been in the national interest for the President to have briefed congressional leaders in advance of the prison camp raid but added: "I can see reasons why the commando attempt had to be kept under strict secrecy."

Sen. Edward M. Kennedy (D-Mass.) also raised the question of the effect of the raid on the safety of American prisoners. "All of us are greatly concerned about the safety of the men — not just the immediate but their long-term safety," Kennedy said. Sen. Birch Bayh (D-Ind.)

accused the administration for taking what he called a "John Wayne approach."

But Scott said it was more important than ever to try to get American prisoners out of North Vietnam because they are being tortured, "inadequately fed, and kept in narrow cells in violation of the Geneva convention for the treatment of POW's."

Scott said he suspects that the wives and mothers of American prisoners "are on our side in this."

Sen. Henry M. Jackson (D-Wash.), a senior member of the Armed Services Committee, also called the effort to free the prisoners "sound, prudent and sensible."

"I believe the action here was fully warranted," he said. "I believe everything should be done to free our prisoners." Asked whether he feared possible reprisals against U.S. prisoners, Jackson said, "One has to take a calculated risk." In the House also, the raid

was both applauded and criticized

Republican Leader Gerald R. Ford of Michigan called the sortie "a great effort to try to rescue some of those being held." He said he hoped for "better intelligence" in any future similar operation.

Rep. Robert L. Leggett (D-Calif.) described the raid as "a first-magnitude blunder from the very beginning." Had there been any prisoners there, Leggett said, the North Vietnamese guards probably would have shot them as soon as the raid was discovered.

If the North Vietnamese retaliate against other prisoners, Leggett added, "it will be a high price to pay for someone's desire to be a hero."

Rep. John V. Tunney (D-Calif.) called the raid "fauty in conception and. . . faulty in execution." Tunney, California Senator-elect, claimed it was based on bad intelligence and could endanger the lives of other prisoners.