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Stennis's Condition

Is Reported Better; He Talks With Aide

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WASHINGTON, Feb. 1 (UPI) —Senator John C. Stennis, showing definite improvement but still in "very serious" condition, conferred with an aide from his hospital bed today, less than 48 hours after he was shot in a holdup.

A spokesman for Walter Reed Army Medical center, where the 71-year-old Mississippi Democrat underwent surgery for two bullet wounds, said that Mr. Stennis, chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, "has shown definite improvement since this morning."

Maj. Frank Garland said that a respirator, or oxygen mask, had been removed and that Mr. Stennis had been transferred from a recovery room to a private room within the hospital's intensive care suite.

"Since removal from the respirator, he is able to speak, is alert and conversant," Major Garland told reporters at mid-afternoon. At a 6 A.M. briefing, the hospital had reported only a "slight improvement" in Mr. Stennis's condition during the night.

The Senator's son, State Representative John Hampton Stennis of Jackson, Mississippi, visited his father with his mother, Mrs. Coy Hines Stennis, in the morning. He reported that the Senator had eagerly questioned the about his family and friends and about events in Washington and in Mississippi.