

Surgery Brings

STENNIS'

Setback

CONDITION

THE STATES-ITEM

Tuesday, February 6, 1973

New Orleans, La.

10 Cents

'GRAVE'

FEB 6 1973

WASHINGTON (AP) — The condition of Sen. John C. Stennis worsened following new surgery today and a hospital spokesman said his chance of recovery "is considered grave." The senator was shot twice in a holdup a week ago.

The 71-year-old Mississippi Democrat was in the operating room at Walter Reed Army Medical Center for 45 minutes after doctors suspected a blockage had developed in his small intestine, said hospital spokesman Maj. Frank Garland.

He said that while no blockage was found, "this additional surgery has resulted in a worsening" of Stennis' condition. "He remains very seriously ill and the prognosis is considered grave," Garland added at a 5 a. m., CST, news briefing.

Stennis' wife, Coy, and his son, John Hampton Stennis, and daughter, Mrs. Margaret Syme, were at the hospital during the night. Members of his staff also were present.

Stennis is chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee and one of the most influential members of the Congress. First elected to the Senate in 1947, he ranks seventh in seniority among the 100 senators.

He was shot twice in front of his home last Tuesday evening by two male teen-agers after they robbed him of his wallet and wristwatch. Police said Stennis offered no resistance in the robbery, but the youths decided to shoot him anyway.

THE FBI AND police have not arrested any suspects.

The shooting has given rise to new demands for gun control legislation, although Stennis himself generally opposed such legislation.

One bullet, the most serious wound, tore through Stennis' stomach, piercing the pancreas and damaging a major vein in the intestinal tract. The second bullet struck his left thigh and was considered a flesh wound.

Stennis, who stayed conscious and walked 50 feet into his house after the shooting, underwent 6½ hours of emergency surgery at the medical center.

A hospital spokesman said his general good health was a factor in his favor, but Stennis' condition was listed throughout the week as very serious, the hospital's designation for its most gravely ill patients.

Stennis has been conscious during much of the time and he was moved from intensive care into the hospital's VIP Suite on Sunday. He was granted a request to wear his own pajamas.

But the hospital said a change in his condition occurred overnight. The full text of today's 5 a. m. statement said:

"Last night Sen. Stennis' surgeons became concerned about a change in the condition of his small intestine. They suspected venous infarction (blockage).

"Consequently, the surgical team conducted exploratory surgery beginning at 2:15 a. m. The operative procedure lasted 45 minutes. No venous infarction was found, but the surgery disclosed some vascular congestion and inflammation of the small intestine."

"This condition by itself is compatible with recovery. The surgical team is satisfied with the way Sen. Stennis tolerated the surgery. This additional surgery has resulted in a worsening of his condition.

"He remains very seriously ill and the prognosis is considered grave."

But, Garland warned, "this additional surgery has resulted in a worsening" of Stennis' condition. "He remains very seriously ill and the prognosis is considered grave."

Stennis, who was hospitalized Jan. 30 after he was shot twice, once in the stomach and once in the left thigh, had been reported improving slightly.

Continued from Front Page

on an almost daily basis until today's surprise announcement.

NEWSMEN WERE summoned to the hospital at 2:30 a. m., CST, after Stennis emerged from the operating room. But the hospital waited until 5 a. m. to announce the results of the surgery.

Garland said Stennis' doctors had become concerned "about a change in the condition of his small intestine" during the night and suspected a blockage of the intestine.

No blockage was found during the 45-minute operation, Garland said, but the vascular congestion and inflammation of the small intestine was disclosed by the surgery.

"There has been a change," was all Garland would tell newsmen about the senator's condition about 2:30 a. m., CST.

Garland said the hospital was re-establishing a press center at the hospital at the request of the senator's staff. Telephone company workers were reinstalling telephones early today that were removed from the press area only on Monday.

Members of the senator's staff were at the hospital. The lieutenant governor of Mississippi, William Winter, was reported en route to Washington from Jackson, Miss., at the request of the Stennis family.

Stennis is chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee and one of the most powerful members of the Congress. He was elected to the Senate

in 1947 and stands seventh among the 100 senators in seniority.

POLICE ARE STILL looking for two teen-agers who shot Stennis in front of his home last Tuesday evening after robbing him at gunpoint. Police said that although Stennis offered no resistance in the robbery, the youths decided to shoot him anyway.

Despite his wounds, the senator staggered into his home and directed the call for help. He was rushed to Walter Reed Army Medical Center where he underwent 6½ hours of emergency surgery.

Garland had said the most serious injury was caused by a bullet which entered the senator's lower rib cage and tore downward through the middle part of his stomach, piercing the pancreas and damaging a major vein that empties blood into the intestinal tract.

The bullet then passed through the first portion of the large intestine and lodged in the fleshy portion of the right thigh.

The spokesman said the bullet was not removed, saying "its presence creates no problem." But the senator's condition was given throughout the week as very serious, the hospital's listing for its most gravely ill patients.

The spokesman said the second bullet struck the senator's left thigh, but was only a flesh wound.

Early Monday, the hospital spokesman said Stennis was "getting along just fine" and reported he was moved into the Presidential Suite. Stennis was conscious at times and once requested he be allowed to wear his pajamas. The request was granted.