

A Meeting on War Issue Asked By Fulbright Group

By JOHN W. FINNEY
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WASHINGTON, May 1—The Senate Foreign Relations Committee, moving with intended restraint to challenge the Administration's policy on Cambodia, took the unusual step today of requesting a conference with President Nixon to discuss the American military involvement there.

In response, Mr. Nixon invited the Senators jointly with the House Foreign Affairs Committee to a meeting at 5 P.M. Tuesday. He also invited the Senate and House Armed Services Committees to meet with him at 8 A.M. Tuesday.

Senate Foreign Relations sources indicated, however, that the committee might not be interested in a joint meeting since it would not reflect the Senators' special responsibility, under the Constitution, in the area of foreign affairs.

By a unanimous vote, the committee decided to send a

letter to the President requesting the conference at his earliest possible convenience. The letter, signed by Senator J. W. Fulbright, Democrat of Arkansas and chairman of the committee, was delivered at the White House today.

As if to clear the decks for what Senator Albert Gore, Democrat of Tennessee, described as "an impending constitutional crisis," the committee today approved legislation that would repeal the 1964 Tonkin Gulf resolution, which was often cited by President Johnson as Congressional authorization for the American military involvement in Southeast Asia.

Senator Fulbright, reflecting a nearly unanimous view with the committee, made it clear that he emphatically disagreed with the President's decision to send Americans into combat

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in Cambodia, which he said would result in "a major enlargement" of the war in Southeast Asia. He also questioned whether the President had legal authority to send United States troops into Cambodia.

Senator Mike Mansfield of Montana, the majority leader, who up until now has tended to give qualified support to Mr. Nixon's policy, broke with the Administration today over Cambodia.

With his voice rising to a shrill pitch of anger, Senator Mansfield said in a Senate speech that "what confronts nation in Indochina is not a question of saving face. It is a question of saving lives."

"The vital concern of this nation, and I use the word 'vital' advisedly," he said, "must be to end our involvement in the war in Vietnam. It is not to become bogged down in another war in all of Indochina."

As Senator Mansfield finished, Senator Hugh Scott of Pennsylvania, the Senate Republican leader, rose to defend the President, praising him for a "courageous and remarkable decision," which could shorten the war.

If the conference is held it will be the first time that the Foreign Relations Committee as a group has met with a President since 1919, when the committee, then headed by Henry Cabot Lodge of Massachusetts was at loggerheads with President Woodrow Wilson over ratification of the Versailles

Peace Treaty and creation of the League of Nations.

Just as in 1919, when the committee blocked ratification of the Versailles Treaty, the committee now appears headed for a crucial foreign policy confrontation with the White House. The immediate issue is future American policy in Southeast Asia, but the underlying confrontation that is developing is over the power of the President to engage in foreign hostilities without the affirmative approval of Congress.