

Senators Soften Language of Cambodia Amendment

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WASHINGTON, May 21—The White House and its Senate critics were at an impasse today in their attempt to reach an accommodation on a move to prohibit future military activities in Cambodia without the consent of Congress.

As a conciliatory gesture, however, the critics decided to modify their amendment to the Foreign Military Sales Act to make clear that it was designed to reinforce President Nixon's announced plan to withdraw all American forces from Cambodia by July 1.

Whether this gesture would avert a confrontation between the White House and the Senate was unclear.

The immediate effect, however, was to deepen the division between the Senate, where there appears to be a majority supporting a restrictive Cambodian amendment, and the

Administration, which has thus far opposed any amendment on the ground that it might encroach upon the President's authority as Commander in Chief.

Last weekend, the White House took the initiative in seeking an accommodation with its senate critics through overtures to Senator John Sherman Cooper, Republican of Kentucky. Along with Senator Frank Church, Democrat of Idaho, Senator Cooper is the sponsor of an amendment before the Senate that would prohibit the President from using any funds to "retain" American forces in Cambodia or for supplying military advisers, mercenaries or air combat support to the Cambodian armed forces.

Throughout this week, highly placed White House officials, including Henry A. Kissinger, the President's adviser on national security, have discussed

with Senator Coeopr possible changes in the amendment that might make it acceptable to the Administration.

The Administration wanted the amendment reworded to make clear that it in no way detracted from the authority of the President as commander in chief. The Senators, in turn, were reluctant to have the amendment worded so that the President could use it to justify further military involvement in Cambodia without the approval of Congress.

As modified, the preamble to the amendment says it is offered "in concert with the declared objective of the President of the United States to avoid involvement of the United States in Cambodia after July 1, 1970." The original preamble did not mention the President.

Senator Cooper announced this evening that he was abandoning the negotiations with

the White House and would press for a vote on the amendment, perhaps next week. The senator said the modification was along the lines of one of the suggestions made to the White House.

Senator Albert Gore, meanwhile, complained to the Senate that President Nixon had told leaders of veterans and retired officer groups of the plans to send United States troops into Cambodia two days before he disclosed the operation to Congress and the nation.

The Tennessee Democrat quoted from a letter of May 13 from Vice Adm. W. R. Smedberg 3d, retired, president of the Retired Officers Association, to his members urging support for what he described as the President's "difficult and courageous decision."

Noting that Secretary of State William P. Rogers had

made no mention of the impending operation when he testified before a closed session of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on April 28 and that President Nixon had not informed congressional leaders until the operation was underway on April 30, Senator Gore said:

"This letter, if correct, indicates that the decision was being discussed with sundry private citizens while the information with respect to it was being withheld from the Senate by no less a personage than the Secretary of State himself."

"This is a shocking situation," he told the Senate.

Later, the White House press secretary Ronald L. Ziegler, denied that Mr. Nixon had told the group that Cambodia was to be invaded. The President merely discussed the general situation with the group, Mr. Ziegler said.