

Indochina Debate in Senate Shifts to Mercenaries Issue

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Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, June 12 — The Senate's debate on Indochina shifted today to the issue of whether the Administration should be permitted to finance the introduction of foreign troops into Cambodia.

Rebuffed yesterday on a proposal stating that the President, in his capacity as Commander in Chief, could keep United States forces in Cambodia if he felt it necessary to protect American forces in Vietnam, supporters of the Administration turned today to another provision of the proposed legislative restrictions on future American military operations in Cambodia.

The provision would prohibit the President from entering into any agreement "to provide military instruction in Cambodia or to provide persons to engage in any combat activity in support of Cambodian forces."

The sponsors of the proposed restrictions — Senator John Sherman Cooper, Republican of Kentucky, and Senator Frank Church, Democrat of Idaho — consider the provision as simply the "antimercenary provision" of their proposed amendment to a foreign military sales bill. But as interpreted by the administration, the provision would exempt Cambodia from coverage under the President's Guam Doctrine of helping Asian nations to defend themselves.

Linked to Montagnard Force

The genesis of this provision goes back to arrangements that the United States entered into several years ago to establish mercenary forces among the Montagnard tribesmen in Vietnam and among the Meo tribesmen in Laos. The sponsors said the provision was designed to prevent a repetition of such a mercenary arrangement to assist the Lon Nol Government in Cambodia.

With American encouragement, Thailand is now preparing to send a force of ethnic Cambodian "volunteers" to help the Cambodian Army. The Administration has not said whether the United States would provide additional pay and allowances to this "volunteer" force, as was done in the case of the Thai division sent to South Vietnam.

Throughout the debate, the sponsors of the Cooper-Church amendment have sought to emphasize that their proposal would not preclude military assistance, such as the supply of weapons, to third-country forces going to the aid of Cambodia.

Thus, they have argued, unless the Administration intends to enter into mercenary arrangements, the amendment should not interfere with implementation with the Guam Doctrine enunciated last year by President Nixon during his Asian trip.

Supporters of the Administration, however, have a different interpretation of the restrictive effects of the amendment. Senator Robert P. Griffin of Michigan, the assistant Republican leader, told reporters today that the controversial provision "means we can't help anybody who wants to help Cambodia."

"The whole purpose of the Guam Doctrine is to phase out the use of American forces and in other ways help those Asian forces that want to help themselves," he said.

Reflecting Administration wishes, both Senator Griffin and Senator Hugh Scott, the Senate Republican leader, are preparing amendments to the provision designed to make it clear that the provision would not preclude assistance to "third-country forces" helping Cambodia.

Senator Griffin's amendment would emphasize that the prohibitions in the provision applied only to United States personnel. Senator Scott's proposal, which he is still drafting, would seek to make clear that the provision would not interfere with implementation of the Guam or Nixon Doctrine.

Whether either of the Republican leaders will offer their amendments will hinge largely on the likely vote.

After five weeks of debate and yesterday's crucial defeat, Administration forces were becoming resigned to letting the Cooper-Church amendment come to a vote in the Senate. The Administration would then concentrate its efforts on blocking or modifying the amendment in a Senate-House conference committee.

The Senate, meanwhile, turned today to debate on other features of the foreign military sales bill.

By a 56-to-6 vote, it rejected an amendment by Senator John J. Williams, Republican of Delaware, that would have eliminated provisions authorizing \$600-million in credit sales of arms of foreign countries during the present and coming fiscal year. The Senate then voted, 59 to 1, against a second Williams proposal to delete a provision expressing Congressional support for credit arms sales to Israel.

Senator Williams offered the amendments, not with the expectation that they would be adopted but to voice the argument that in line with the philosophy of the Cooper-Church amendment, Congress should retain control over foreign arms sales.

In arguing that Congress should assume responsibility for regulating arms sales, he said:

"First we sell arms to a country, then we send advisers to show them how to use the arms. Then we send troops to protect the advisers. And that's how America gets into wars these days."