

Sharp Anti-Bombing Shift in the Senate

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The conservative Senate Appropriations Committee broadened the recommendations of its own defense subcommittee yesterday and voted 24 to 0 to impose an absolute cutoff on all present and past appropriations for U.S. bombing of Cambodia and Laos.

The vote apparently reflects a decisive turn in congressional sentiment.

Conservatives like chairman John J. McClellan (Dem-Ark.), Norris H. Cotton (Rep-N.H.) and Roman L. Hruska (Rep-Neb.) joined with long-time war critics like Mark Hatfield (Rep-Ore.) and Charles McC. Mathias Jr. (Rep-Md.) to give unanimous committee approval to a fund cutoff amendment that is even stronger and broader in

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scope than a similar ban voted by the House last week and by the Senate defense appropriations subcommittee Monday.

The earlier action by the House and Senate defense appropriations subcommittee merely forbade any funds or transfer authority in the \$2.9 billion supplemental appropriations bill from being used by President Nixon to finance further Cambodia bombing.

Administration spokesmen have said that this wouldn't force the President to stop the bombing, because he could use funds previously voted in other appropriations bills.

Yesterday's action by the full appropriations committee, which came on an amendment sponsored by Senator Thomas F. Eagleton (Dem-Mo.), is intended to seal off this escape hatch. It applies the prohibition to both the funds in the supplemental appropriations and to all funds previously voted. It is intended as an absolute barrier to further bombing, if it is ultimately approved by both chambers of Congress.

The 24 to 0 vote by the conservative appropriations committee, many of whose members previously have opposed fund cut-offs, appears to mark a sharp turn in sentiment — a fact remarked on by several members of the committee.

"I think the general feeling is that we've been there a long time — and it's time," said Henry Bellmon (Rep-Okla.), one of those who voted for the Eagleton amendment.

HAWK

"I voted consistently as what you might call a hawk for eight years," said Norris Cotton (Rep-N.H.), "but now I consider it's a new ballgame . . . We've got our men back, we've got our prisoners back . . . As far as I'm concerned, we're not going to back ourselves into a new war over there."

"The bombing is more or less useless," said Hiram L. Fong (Rep-Hawaii), another appropriations committee member. "Bombing can't hold a territory. If you continue, you're going to have more prisoners of war. And if there are more prisoners of war, you're going to have to go in and get them

out . . . You get back into the same situation" as in Vietnam, he concluded.

"If we continue to bomb . . . we are certain to have a loss of troops," said McClellan in announcing approval of the Eagleton amendment. "We'll lose aviators, there'll be prisoners of war again and then we'll have another POW problem."

That danger, he said, would have to be weighed against the advantages of

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continuing the bombing in order to "enforce the (peace) agreement. I have chosen to risk the consequences of stopping the bombing."

TURN

Senator Edward W. Brooke (Rep-Mass.), who offered language including Laos as well as Cambodia in the no-bombing provision, said the committee vote, coupled with last week's House floor vote, "signals a decisive turn in attitude" on U.S. military participation in Indochina.

Asked if White House loss of prestige due to the Watergate scandal may have played a role, he said this was possible but the main factor was increased fear in Congress that the Nation would be drawn into another Indochina conflict.

The White House has said bombing is needed to keep an independent Cambodian government in power, so that North Vietnam cannot take over Cambodia and use it as a base to attack South Vietnam.

Critics contend the President lacks legal authority to bomb without congressional assent.

In yesterday's vote, two members of the 26-member appropriations committee missed the vote — Senator John Stennis (Dem-Miss.), recovering from gunshot wounds suffered while being robbed; and Senator Gale W. McGee (Dem-Wyo.), who left the committee room a few minutes before the vote.