

S, THURSDAY, JULY 12, 1973

SENATE URGES BAN ON 'WEATHER WAR'

Wants U.S. to Seek End of Environmental Conflict

By LINDA CHARLTON
Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, July 11 — The Senate gave overwhelming approval today to a resolution calling on the United States to take the lead in seeking an international agreement to prohibit "environmental warfare" such as past American rainmaking practices in Southeast Asia.

The "sense of the Senate" resolution, which was sponsored by Senator Claiborne Pell of Rhode Island and 18 others, was adopted by a vote of 82 to 10.

Mr. Pell, a Democrat, noted in a statement released today that the potential military use of environmental modification ranged "from simple rainmaking to possible earthquake stimulation, steering of ocean currents or tidal wave stimulation," as well as "the danger of unforeseeable repercussions from such tampering with natural forces."

He noted that the Department of Defense has "failed to deny" reports that weather-modification techniques were used in North Vietnam, Laos and South Vietnam for military purposes. He added that he "would be very much surprised if some of the other superpowers have not taken steps to develop their own offensive military weather-modification capabilities."

He added that the Department of Defense had "failed to deny" reports that weather-modification techniques were

used in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia for military purposes. He said he "would be very much surprised if some of the other superpowers have not taken steps to develop their own offensive military weather-modification capabilities."

Rainfall Pattern Altered

In July, 1972, The New York Times disclosed that the United States had been altering the natural rainfall in Southeast Asia through an Air Force cloud-seeding program in an effort to cripple North Vietnamese troop movements and reduce the effectiveness of anti-aircraft missiles.

The use of cloud-seeding was said to have provoked an intense internal debate during the Johnson Administration. There were reports that the then Secretary of Defense, Robert S. McNamara, ordered a halt in all such rainmaking late in 1967, but the secret program was said to have continued at least as late as 1971.

Scientists have projected a number of other possible methods of tampering with natural forces for military purposes. Among those listed by Dr. Gordon J. J. MacDonald, a geophysicist, in 1968, were the alteration of the earth's temperature, setting off tidal waves and creating a "hole" in the shielding layer of ozone that absorbs much of the sun's ultraviolet radiation. Others have warned of the potential for "possibly uncontrollable and unpredictable destruction."

The report of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee accompanying the resolution noted that there has been no response to two requests for comment on the Pell measure, which was introduced in 1972.

At the international environmental conference in Stockholm last year the United States delegation was influential in weakening a recommendation that all governments "carefully

evaluate the likelihood and magnitude of climatic effects" of weather modification.

Growing Support Noted

The Senate resolution urges the United States to "seek the agreement of other governments to a proposed treaty prohibiting the use of any environmental or geophysical modification activity as a weapon of war, or the carrying out of any research or experimentation directed thereto."

Senator Pell, in his statement, recalled that during hearings in June 1972. "Administration witnesses opposed this resolution on the basis that there is not enough information available" to warrant it. He said, that all the "private" witnesses supported the basic thrust of the resolution, however, and that in the past year there had "been growing" support both here and abroad.

Among the evidence he cited was a recommendation for such a ban by the North Atlantic Assembly in November, 1972.

A sense of the Senate resolution such as this one is simply a formal expression of Senate feeling and does not have the effect of law.