

SENATORS ANGRY

Some Seek to Cut Off Funds for Widened Military Action

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Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, April 29—

The Administration's decision to support a South Vietnamese military operation in Cambodia set off moves by leading Senators in both parties today to cut off funds for American military activities in Cambodia.

The moves—which could lead to a constitutional confrontation with the White House—were indicative of a widespread, angry and frustrated reaction in the Senate.

Some Senators, however, such as John Stennis of Mississippi, chairman of the Armed Services Committee, and Robert P. Griffin of Michigan, the assistant Republican leader, described the operation as a limited one designed to destroy North Vietnamese and Vietcong sanctuaries in Cambodia near the border of South Vietnam.

'Could Be a Turning Point'

Senator Stennis said that the destruction of the enemy sanctuaries in Cambodia was "essential" if the United States was to continue withdrawing troops from South Vietnam. While supporting the Administration action, Senator Stennis made it clear that he was opposed to providing any "extensive" military aid to the Cambodian Government.

"This could be a turning point in the war for us for the good," he said. "I do not believe in itself it is an escalation—not yet, not yet."

The critical reaction to the Administration move was strongest among members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

U.S. AIDS SAIGON PUSH IN CAMBODIA WITH PLANES, ARTILLERY, ADVISERS; MOVE STIRS OPPOSITION IN SENATE

Two of its members—Senator John Sherman Cooper, Republican of Kentucky, and Senator Frank Church, Democrat of Idaho—announced that they were drafting an amendment that would preclude the use of any funds appropriated by Congress for military assistance or operations in Cambodia. The amendment would be attached to a military sales bill now before the Committee.

Mike Mansfield of Montana,

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the Senate Democratic leader, and George D. Aiken, Republican of Vermont, announced that they would co-sponsor the amendment. Senator Mansfield expressed hope that the Senate would act on the measure next week.

Senators Aiken, Cooper and Mansfield have generally supported President Nixon's Vietnamization policy.

Senator George S. McGovern, Democrat of South Dakota, and Senator Mark O. Hatfield, Republican of Oregon, announced that they would move to attach a similar amendment to the military authorization bill, which is scheduled to reach the Senate floor in the middle of May.

In view of the critical reaction in the Senate, Senator Mansfield predicted that some amendment curbing the Administration's authority in Cambodia would almost certainly be adopted. With its sponsorship by prominent Senators of both parties, such an amendment could expect the support of the liberal-to-moderate majority in the Senate and would be opposed by the minority of conservative Republicans and Southern Democrats.

But whether such an amendment, if passed by the Senate, would be accepted by the House, where the reaction today to the Cambodian operation was more restrained, was questionable.

Regardless of the outlook for an amendment in the House however, it was apparent that an influential Senate coalition, which has long been critical of the Vietnam war, was now intent on a direct challenge to President Nixon on the Cambodian issue. The constitutional question now being intentionally raised by this coalition is whether the President has authority to embark upon military activities in Cambodia without the consent of the Congress.

To congressional observers, the Administration apparently underestimated the critical reaction in the Senate, particularly in Foreign Relations Committee, which on Monday strongly advised Secretary of State William P. Rogers against any American military involvement in Cambodia.

The Administration did not brief congressional leaders on the decision to support the South Vietnamese operation, and the first that many learned of the action was through news reports of the announcement by the Saigon Government today.

Perhaps because of the absence of communications between the White House and Capitol Hill, there were differing views in the Senate on what was actually involved in the Cambodian operation.

Some Senators, including most members of the Foreign Relations Committee, saw the Administration embarking upon a critical policy decision that would lead to a broadening of the war in Southeast Asia and jeopardize plans for withdrawal of American troops from South Vietnam.

But Senator Griffin said that Henry A. Kissinger, the President's adviser on national security, had called him about noon—several hours after the Saigon announcement—to emphasize that the operation was “a limited action,” taken “in the interest of protecting American troops in Vietnam.” Mr. Kissinger was said to have emphasized that the decision to support the South Vietnamese operation was in no way related to the request from Premier Lon Nol of Cambodia for American military assistance.

Senator Griffin said elimination of the enemy sanctuaries in Cambodia “could hasten the day when American troops are brought home.”

Support for the President's action also came from such conservative Republican Senators as John G. Tower of Texas and Peter H. Dominick of Colorado, both members of the Armed Services Committee. Senator Tower said that he was “encouraged by this action because it places anti-Communist forces in an improved military tactical position and because it will result in fewer American casualties in the long run.”

Some Support Lost

By its action, however, the Administration appeared to have lost the support of two key Republican liberals—Senator Cooper and Senator Aiken—who have defended Nixon's policy in Vietnam against Democratic criticism.

Senator Aiken said: “I did not think the President would do what he reportedly has done, and I never was so disappointed in my life.”

Senator Cooper described the action in Cambodia as a “U-turn” in Administration policy in Southeast Asia.

Senator Jacob K. Javits, Republican of New York, said that the action “must be deemed to be the President's decision to expand the war into Cambodia.”

Senator Charles E. Goodell, Republican of New York, said: “Today's action dramatically demonstrates how the strategy of Vietnamization has failed and how it pulls us inexorably into a wider war.”