

CONGRESS URGED BY NIXON'S AIDES TO KILL WAR CURB

Cooper-Church Amendment
Infringes the President's
Power, Conferees Told

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WASHINGTON, July 15 —

The Nixon Administration strongly urged Congress today to drop the Senate's Cooper-Church amendment restricting military action in Cambodia, on the ground that, if enacted, it would infringe on the President's "lawful responsibilities" as Commander in Chief.

In a memorandum from the State and Defense Departments, the Administration took probably its most emphatic position in opposition to the amendment. It was addressed to the members of the conference committee assigned to reconcile differences in the Senate and House versions of the foreign military sales bill, to which the Cooper-Church amendment attaches.

The conferees began today what is expected to be a protracted discussion of the bill.

3 Strictures Involved

It is the Senate's version that incorporates the amendment co-sponsored by Senators John Sherman Cooper of Kentucky and Frank Church of Idaho. It specifies that without Congressional consent the President may spend no funds to retain American troops in Cambodia, to provide foreign military advisers or mercenaries to aid the Cambodian Government or to supply combat air support for the Cambodian forces.

The Administration appeared to rule out any compromise as it recommended that the amendment be stricken by the Senate-House conference committee. Presenting the "executive branch position" on the amendment, the memorandum said:

"The Administration opposes this amendment and urges that it be stricken. The restraints imposed by this section appear to affect the President's exercise of his lawful responsibilities as Commander in Chief of the armed forces."

Positions Polarized

At the initial meeting today, the House conferees were reported to have taken an adamant stand for deletion of the amendment, thus indicating there was no room for compromise. The Senate conferees were said to have been insistent upon retention of the amendment and to have begun dropping hints that they were prepared to see the military sales bill, authorizing foreign credit sales of arms, die

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rather than retreat.

At one point during the Senate debate earlier, the Administration appeared willing to accept the Cooper-Church amendment if it was revised to permit financial assistance to countries giving military support to the Cambodian Government.

Now unexpectedly the Administration finds similar restrictions on indirect military assistance to Cambodia are being proposed by the Senate Armed Services Committee, in the form of an amendment to the military procurement authorization bill.

In a report to the Senate today, the Armed Services Committee said it was revising a section of the bill to make clear that the United States could help finance operations of South Vietnamese and other "free world forces" in the Communist sanctuaries across the Cambodian border. But Senator John Stennis of Mississippi, chairman of the committee, made clear that this "enlargement" of authority was not designed to give the Administration the power to finance military operations in support of the Cambodian Government.

To 'Work in Concert'

Senator Stennis said at a news conference that his committee's amendment would work "in concert" with the Cooper-Church amendment in preventing the executive branch from undertaking any military commitments to the Cambodian Government.

Consideration is scheduled to start Monday on the military procurement bill. The debate is expected to last at least a month. The bill authorizes \$19.2-billion in weapons procurement and research and development by the Pentagon in the present fiscal year.

The 18-man Armed Services Committee is dominated by men usually identified with the hawkish faction in the Senate, such as Senator Stennis, Richard B. Russell of Georgia and Henry M. Jackson of Washington, all Democrats, and Strom Thurmond of South Carolina, John G. Tower of Texas, Peter H. Dominick of Colorado, George Murphy of California and Barry Goldwater of Arizona, all Republicans.

In a floor statement intended to put military critics on the defensive, Senator Stennis described the authorization as "austere," noting that the committee had cut \$1.3-billion from the Administration's request.

In terms of actual buying power, he contended, the defense budget, rather than increasing as decreasing to the point where the Pentagon was being forced to postpone modernization programs.

While Senator Stennis was speaking on the Senate floor, a bipartisan Congressional group, known as Members of Congress for Peace Through Law, was holding a news conference to contend that the authorization bill could be cut by at least another \$3-billion "without in any way weakening our national security."