

# Congressional Criticism on Vietnam Policy Flaring Up Again

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Long-smoldering Congressional criticism of the Administration's Indochina policy showed signs of flaring up again today as a Republican Senator warned that President Nixon might become a one-term President and a group of Senate Democrats proposed a Congressional injunction against supporting an invasion of North Vietnam.

In an unusual public warning for a Republican to give to the White House, Senator Jacob K. Javits of New York said President Nixon's political future was in "grave danger" if the President did not abandon his Vietnamization program for a policy of complete withdrawal from Vietnam.

## Restlessness Indicated

With the support of 17 Democratic Senators, including most of the potential Presidential candidates, Senator Walter F. Mondale, Democrat of Minnesota, introduced legislation that would prohibit American forces from supporting an invasion of North Vietnam without "prior and explicit" Congressional authorization. The prin-

cipal cosponsor of the bill was Senator William B. Saxbe of Ohio, a Republican moderate who has sought to maintain amiable relations with the White House.

To both Democrats and Republicans on Capitol Hill, such proposals and statements were indicative of a growing Congressional restlessness with the Administration's Vietnam policy.

For months the criticism had been muted by the Administration's repeated contention that it was "winding down the war." As evidenced by the progressive withdrawal of American troops. But now Republican political leaders acknowledge that this argument is losing its political effectiveness as the critics raise the question of when the "winding down" will be completed.

This changing political climate was noted, for example, by Senator Robert J. Dole of Kansas, the Republican National Committee chairman, who observed that the Democrats were "putting the screws to us" on troop withdrawal.

The turning point appears to have come in the last week of first with President Nixon's statement at a news confer-

ence last Wednesday refusing to rule out a South Vietnamese invasion of North Vietnam and then with indications that the South Vietnamese operation in Laos was running into difficulties.

## Saxbe Explains Position

This combination of events, for example, was enough to prompt Senator Saxbe to become the principal Republican co-sponsor when approached by Senator Mondale on his bill.

When asked to explain his sponsorship, the Senator said: "In all the briefings by the Administration, there has not been one word that if things didn't go well in Laos, we would not go into North Vietnam."

In a statement accompanying introduction of his bill, Senator Mondale said, "The Congress faces a crisis of responsibility."

"It is now clear," he said, "that the President is widening this war, rather than ending it. If it is to be ended, if limits are to be firmly set, Congress must do so."

As long as the Laotian operation was a potential success, particularly in supporting the Administration's avowed objective of assisting Vietnamization and troop withdrawal, there was an evident reluctance to criticize the Administration. Shortly after the Laotian operation began, for example, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee laid aside plans to conduct hearings on "How to end the war."

## Misgivings Seen Growing

But as the Laotian operation encountered difficulties, there has been a perceptible rise in the misgivings in the Senate about Administration policy and in the willingness to express them.

Senator J. W. Fulbright, the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, remains in a mood of despairing resignation, bored with criticizing the Administration and uninterested in pushing legislation. Just returned from a four-day trip to Arkansas, the Senator wearily explained to reporters that he was "not optimistic that any legislation can make the President stop the war."

More and more, however, the criticism—and thus the pressure on the Foreign Relations Committee to act—is coming from moderates and liberals in both parties who have not been particularly identified with the Vietnam issue, such as Senators Mondale, Saxbe and Charles McC. Mathias, Republican of Maryland.

In a Senate speech earlier this week supporting legislation requiring withdrawal of all troops by year-end, Senator Mathias said that "despite profound concern" over the Laotian operation, he had chosen "to keep my counsel and remain silent" in the hope that "all would be well and end happily."

## 'It Is Time to Act'

"But now," he said, "it is time to act. Now it is time for Congress finally to marshal its

resolve and enact the legislation necessary to accelerate our withdrawal from the tragic conflict in Southeast Asia."

In a speech prepared for delivery this evening before the Mid-American World Trade Conference in Chicago, Senator Javits said, "time is closing in on the Administration with respect to ending the Vietnam war." He predicted that if the Administration did not adopt a national policy of withdrawing all troops by mid-1972, then "there is a good chance that the Congress will act to establish it by law."

"I feel the time has come for a Republican Senator to post warnings that the ship of state may be headed for the same rocks which broke up and sank the Presidency of President Johnson," Senator Javits said.

The Nixon Administration, he said, "faces the same dilemma now which faced the Johnson Administration in 1967."

"I am speaking here of the 'winning' and 'losing' syndrome which spurred President Johnson on to those measures of military escalation and insensitivity to public opinion which brought his political career to an end," Senator Javits said.

The criticism of the Administration's Vietnam policy began developing before President Nixon issued his State of the World Message today, in which he defended his policy of Vietnamization and the operations in Cambodia and Laos. Except for the usual statements of praise from Republican leaders, there was little reaction to the Presidential message among members of Congress, most of whom had not had a chance to read the lengthy document nor the time to listen to the President's summation of the message over radio.