

Details Sought On Viet Oil Plans

Washington

The Senate Foreign Relations Committee is finding it difficult to obtain from the State Department details of South Vietnamese plans to grant potentially lucrative offshore oil concessions to American firms.

As a result, committee surces reported yesterday, chairman J. W. Fulbright (Dem-Ark.) has sent a second letter to the State Department after he found an initial department reply unsatisfactory.

The committee's initial inquiry a month ago came after it received the first of what now totals about 8600 letters, generated by a California-based anti-war group called Another Mother for Peace.

They are asking Fulbright to hold hearings on alleged connectins between the continuing U.S. presence in Vietnam and the plans for oil exploratin.

FEVER

In the past year, oil-drilling fever has swept though Southeast Asia, especially in the shallow waters such as tre Straits of Malacca between Indonesia and Malaysia and Singapore. Discoveries have been made in Indonesian waters, including the Java Sea and near Sumatra, and some geologists believe the vast continental shelf of the area holds within it a potential as great as the oil-rich Middle East.

Although no oil has yet been found off Vietnan, U.S. firms have expressed an interest in bidding on leases expected to be offered shortly by the Saigon government under a law promulgated by President Nguyen Van Thieu last December 1.

LEASES

Particular interest is reported in the areas of the Gulf of Siam and around the Con Son penal isle.

But the Foreign Rwlations

Committee's effort to find out about the leases, and any U.S. government role, produced a highly technical State Department response.

When the committee asked State for details of the oil exploratin areas established by the South Vietnamese government, it received a reply that what had been established were marine suvey areas. The requested details were not supplied, committee aides said.

Associated Press