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Tentative Accord On Aid

Washington

House and Senate conferees tentatively agreed yesterday on a bill providing \$327 million for humanitarian aid to South Vietnam and for the cost of evacuating Americans and Vietnamese threatened by Communist reprisals.

The bill also grants the President authority to use the U.S. armed forces to take the people out, but under carefully limited conditions designed to prevent them from getting bogged down in a new war.

The agreement came just

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TENTATIVE AID ACCORD

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two weeks after President Ford urgently asked Congress for \$250 million in humanitarian aid and \$772 million in weapons aid for Saigon—and only half a day after the House, in a marathon session lasting past 2 a.m. yesterday morning, initially passed its version of the \$327 million measure.

The Senate had passed a \$250 million humanitarian evacuation measure Wednesday afternoon.

Final details of the bill will be settled today, according to several members of

the House-Senate conference group.

The \$327 million in the conference bill is probably about all the President can hope to get in emergency aid for South Vietnam.

The widespread conviction in Congress is that South Vietnam can't hold out much longer and that giving it an added \$722 million in emergency military aid won't help survival and will simply waste the money.

The most important provision of the bill was the authority requested by President Ford to use U.S. troops to rescue any Americans,

their Vietnamese wives and children and other Vietnamese endangered by the developing collapse of the Saigon battle front.

The final language was based on the tighter Senate version that permits the President to use force to go in after American citizens and permits rescue of endangered Vietnamese only if incidental to the rescue of Americans.

The bill specifies that the President can't enlarge the number of troops or the scope or duration of the military operation beyond what is needed for the basic rescue operation for Americans.

The exact language of this restriction was inserted for fear a wide-sweeping military rescue operation on behalf of Vietnamese civilians might require a massive show of U.S. force and reinvolve the United States in the war.

In addition, the conference bill specifically keys the military rescue authority into provisions of the War Powers Act, which allows Congress by concurrent resolution to order the President to withdraw the U.S. forces.

The \$327 million — basically the House figure — consists of \$150 million in new authorizations or money to be used for humanitarian aid to the people of South Vietnam, plus \$177 million in reactivated authorizations left over from last year to cover food, medical, transportation, military and other costs connected with evacuation operations.

The \$327 million in the bill is a ceiling only.

The actual funds must be appropriated later in separate legislation. But the authority to use troops for rescue operation goes into effect as soon as both chambers approve the compromise and the President signs it.

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