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Conferees

## Agree On Vietnam Aid

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House-Senate conferees tentatively agreed yesterday on a bill providing \$327 million for humanitarian aid to South Vietnam and for the costs 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 getting bogged down in a new war.

The agreement, announced by Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman John J. Sparkman (D-Ala.), came just 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, passed its version of the \$327 million measure. The Senate had passed a \$250 million version on Wednesday.

The House debate saw Majority Leader Thomas P. (Tip) O'Neill (D-Mass.) part with all the other House leaders and oppose the bill, allying himself with the young doves in the big freshman class. "I am opposed to the intervention of U.S. troops for the evacuation of South Vietnamese," O'Neill declared.

The \$327 million in the humanitarian-evacuation conference bill is probably

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### AID, From A1

about all the President can hope to get in emergency aid for South Vietnam. The widespread conviction in Congress is that further military aid won't help Saigon survive and would simply be a waste.

The remaining details of the two bills are to be resolved in a second conference starting this morning.

In resolving the most important issue, the conferees yesterday adopted the Senate bill's language that would permit the President to use force to go in after American citizens and their dependents, and would permit rescue of endangered Vietnamese only if incidental to the rescue of Americans. In seeking to save endangered Vietnamese, the bill says, 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 American rescue.

This tight restriction is intended to forestall any wide-sweeping military rescue operation on behalf of Vietnamese civilians that 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 to the war powers act, which allows Congress by concurrent resolution to order the President to withdraw U.S. forces.

The \$327 million—basically the House figure—consists of \$150 million in new authorizations 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.

The Senate has insisted that the \$150 million humanitarian aid be channeled through the United Nations, but the House conferees balked, and language was to be worked out overnight that will let the President channel the money through such international agencies as he chooses, not necessarily the United Nations.

Several conferees said the language governing the \$177 million apparently would let the President use some of that evacuation money for weapons aid to Saigon if he believes it necessary to aid in evacuation operations, but this point may be discussed again today. Another unsettled point is whether any of the \$150 million humanitarian aid may be used to help Cambodians; the Senate bill permitted this, the House didn't.

Conferee Hugh Scott (Pa.), the Senate Republican leader, said conferees had retained a House provision barring any humanitarian aid to the North Vietnamese and the Vietcong.

The \$327 million is a ceiling; the actual funds must be appropriated in separate legislation. But the authority to use troops for rescue operations goes into effect as soon as both chambers approve the compromise and the President signs it. If today's conference winds up early, the bill could be cleared through the Senate this afternoon, but House rules would preclude a final vote there until early next week.

Sen. Dick Clark (D-Iowa), who has been sharply critical of the administration for not taking Americans out of Vietnam fast enough before force may be needed, said the latest State Department figures show 1,681 Americans and 562 of their

dependents still in Vietnam, although the White House had pledged to bring the former figure down to 1,500 two days ago.

He said the 200-plus Americans and dependents evacuated in the last 24 hours appeared to represent a slowdown.

"Evacuation should be accelerated because as the North Vietnamese net draws closer around Saigon, the danger to the remaining Americans grows by the hour," Clark told the Senate, "and so does the difficulty of getting them out without a massive reinvolvement of U.S. forces."

It is widely believed on Capitol Hill and has also

been asserted by the State Department that President Ford has inherent powers to use troops to rescue endangered Americans overseas without any specific authorization from Congress. But the War Powers Act and a variety of other legislation forbid him to send troops into a combat situation in Indochina for the purpose of rescuing Vietnamese unless Congress authorizes it.

The conferees granted his request to suspend these laws and authorize him to rescue Vietnamese in certain categories, although the powers aren't quite as broad as he wanted.

Administration spokesmen, for example, weren't happy with the provision limiting the number and scope of Vietnamese rescue operations to whatever is needed to rescue Americans.

The House passed its version of the humanitarian-evacuation bill at 2:40 a.m. yesterday, 230 to 137, after nearly 15 hours of debate marked with emotional heat, tolerant attention and weird parliamentary tangles.

After disposing of more than 40 amendments and two substitute bills, the House ended up approving substantially the same bill drafted by its International Relations Committee.

In an effort to speed debate, the House by late Wednesday afternoon fell into one of the frustrating parliamentary situations that often characterize the un-

wieldy 435-member body's consideration of complex time-consuming issues.

The House agreed to halt debate — and presumably vote — at 4 p.m. on a substitute bill that would have forbidden use of troops to protect the evacuation of Americans and endangered South Vietnamese. But the agreement was to stop only the debate, not the offering of amendments. So for more than an hour members offered amendments which were read by a clerk and voted on but could not be explained or debated.

One was a second substitute bill offered by Rep. Bob Eckhardt (D-Tex.). He told reporters it would place more restrictions on the President's power to use troops, but Republicans hailed it as giving the Chief Executive more flexibility. The House adopted Eckhardt's substitute without debate, 272 to 146, and it appeared by 5:30 p.m. that the debate was over.

But Eckhardt's bill was thrown out by a single objection that it violated House rules by appropriating money in an authorization bill. The debate went on for nine more hours.

Distressed at the House being forced to vote on amendments it had only heard read by a clerk, freshman Rep. Michael T. Blouin (D-Iowa) called the performance "another example of why the people in this country think the only difference between us and the zoo is that we do not have cages."