

CONFEREES AGREE ON USE OF TROOPS

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Tentative Accord Would Let Ford Employ Forces in Vietnam Evacuation

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WASHINGTON, April 24— House and Senate conferees reached a tentative agreement today on legislation that would give President Ford limited authority to use armed forces to evacuate Americans and some South Vietnamese from Saigon.

The agreement is expected to be approved formally by the conference committee tomorrow and to be voted and sent to the President early next week.

In addition to the troop authority, the measure would allot \$327-million to pay for the evacuation and to provide humanitarian aid to Vietnamese through international agencies.

Falls Short of Request

The only military aid allowed would be that directly related to the evacuation.

The measure would fall far short of what President Ford requested. He sought \$722-million in military assistance for the Saigon Government, \$250-million for humanitarian relief and broad authority to use American troops to rescue endangered South Vietnamese.

Nonetheless, Mr. Ford will probably sign the bill. Congress seems unlikely to approve any more money and, without the measure, he would have no authority to use armed force to evacuate Vietnamese.

Meanwhile, Maj. Gen. Winant Sidle, an official Pentagon spokesman, said that the North Vietnamese "have the capability

Conferees Tentatively Approve Use of Troops in Saigon Pullout

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ity right now of mounting a massive attack" on Saigon.

General Sidle added that "something could happen any minute."

The legislation was passed by the Senate yesterday afternoon and by the House in a session that lasted until 2:40 A.M.

Essentially, the conferees adopted the limitation of use of troops contained in the Senate bill and the money allocation provided in the House measure.

Appropriation Is Needed

The money authorized by the bill is merely a limit on the appropriation and cannot be spent until it is appropriated.

It seemed likely that Congress would appropriate part, if not all, of the \$327-million.

Of that sum, \$150-million would be earmarked for humanitarian assistance, and \$177-million could be used at the President's discretion either for evacuation expenses or additional humanitarian aid.

President Ford's belief that he has Constitutional authority, without Congressional action, to use troops to protect and evacuate Americans is not challenged by most members of Congress.

The purpose of the legislation is to give him authority to evacuate Vietnamese dependents of American citizens and others who might be in danger because of their close ties to the United States effort in Indochina.

The bill would allow Vietnamese to accompany Americans in an evacuation. But Vietnamese could be rescued only as long as the size of the United States force, the duration of the presence of the

troops in South Vietnam and the scope and intensity of their combat is not increased beyond that necessary to evacuate the remaining Americans and their dependents.

In other words, in a combat situation, Vietnamese would be permitted on the same evacuation planes as Americans. But the troops could not stay any longer, stray any farther or use any other means of combat than that essential to rescue the Americans.

The Ford Administration said last week that it hoped to evacuate as many as 175,000 Vietnamese, but a figure that large would appear to be impossible under the legislation if hostilities erupt and troops are needed.

As long as there are no hostilities, there is no prohibition on an unlimited evacuation of Vietnamese. But several laws, which would be specifically waived by the new legislation, forbid the use of troops for combat in Vietnam.

Some Senators remained concerned that the rate of withdrawal of Americans was not preceding fast enough.

Early in the week, Administration officials told Congress that the American contingent in Saigon would be cut to 1,500 by Tuesday night.

But today, Congress was told that there was still 1,681 American citizens and 562 alien dependents, mostly Vietnamese wives of Americans, in Saigon.

Senator Dick Clark, Democrat of Iowa, said on the Senate floor that he could not understand why "thousands and thousands" of Vietnamese were being evacuated to the Philippines and Guam, while "so many citizens and their dependents" are "still left behind."

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