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Senate Battle on Viet Police Issue

Washington

Senate liberals are planning a major floor fight to delete all support for South Vietnam's police force and prison system

from the pending foreign aid bill.

The Senators say that the Nixon administration has covered up the full extent of U.S. aid for the South Viet-

namese police force, which, critics contend, is still jailing and torturing political opponents of the government of President Nguyen Van Thieu.

The legislation, which now provides for \$376 million in local economic aid for Southeast Asia — less than two-thirds of the \$632 million initially sought by the administration — is scheduled for a Senate vote late this week.

Since early summer, Senate sources said, a quiet but intensive lobbying effort against further economic aid for police activities in South Vietnam has been waged by a number of anti-war and church groups, including the National Council of Churches.

TALLY

One Senate aide said that a recent count indicated that as many as 35 Senators had expressed interest in deleting such support from the bill.

Most of the Senators who opposed the Vietnam war are expected to support the measure.

"We're going to have a hell of a spirited debate on this because we've had indications that different Senators want to get up and speak on it, said Senator James Abourezk, a freshman Democrat from South Dakota who has been actively opposing the continued police aid.

In a telephone interview, Abourezk said that he is concerned over what he termed the administration's attempt to obfuscate the purpose of its support for the police and prisons in South Vietnam.

"Maybe the American people don't have to know about troop movements or the location of nuclear weapons," he said, "but by God they sure as hell can decide whether they want to support torture or not."

AMENDMENT

In July, Abourezk offered an amendment to the foreign aid bill that would bar the use of U.S. funds for the support of all police and prison activities "of any foreign government or any program of internal intelligence or surveillance on behalf of any foreign government."

Passage of an all-inclusive amendment barring economic aid for any foreign police force or prison sys-

tem is viewed as extremely unlikely, Senate sources said, but many liberals believe that a cutback in South Vietnamese police and prison spending may be approved, if the issue attracts enough public concern.

Critics of the Thieu gov-

ernment have estimated the number of currently detained political prisoners at between 40,000 and 200,000, although the South Vietnamese government officially lists only 5081 "civilian detainees."

New York Times