

Congress Bans A-Test Unless Nixon Orders It

NYTimes

Special to The New York Times

SEP 23 1971

WASHINGTON, Sept. 22— Congress completed action today on an appropriations bill containing a ban on the planned underground nuclear test on Amchitka Island in the Aleutians "unless the President gives his direct approval" for the test.

The restriction was contained in a compromise \$4.7-billion public works and atomic energy appropriations bill that was passed by the House on a vote of 376 to 0 and then by the Senate on a voice vote. The bill was sent to the White House for President Nixon's signature.

Congressional approval of the bill provides the final installment of funds needed by the Atomic Energy Commission to carry out the test while, at the same time, requires a Presidential decision on whether the test should proceed.

Test Being Reviewed

The White House has already said that the test was being reviewed and that the final decision on whether to proceed would be made by President Nixon.

The test—the largest underground nuclear explosion ever scheduled by the A.E.C.—is currently scheduled, according to Administration sources, for early next month, probably between Oct. 2 and Oct. 7. There were reports in Congressional quarters — unconfirmed by the commission—that the thermonuclear device to be tested was lowered at least 300 feet last week into the 6,000-foot hole that has been dug on Amchitka Island for the test.

On the basis of this schedule, it would appear that the President would have to make a final decision in the next several days, although White House sources indicated that Mr. Nixon would not reach a decision before he meets with Emperor Hirohito of Japan this Sunday in Anchorage.

To Test Warhead

The purpose of the planned explosion, which will have a force of nearly 5 megatons (the equivalent of 5 million tons of TNT), is to test the warhead that has been de-

earthquake with a resulting tidal wave, or might release radioactive matter that would endanger wildlife and fisheries in the northern Pacific. The A.E.C. maintains that such risks are negligible.

Scientists also argue that the warhead to be tested is for an obsolete version of the Spartan that is being abandoned by the Defense Department as it revises the Safeguard system. Both the Pentagon and the A.E.C. contend that the test is essential for deployment of the Safeguard system.