

Pullout Plan Stirs Praise And Concern in Congress

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WASHINGTON, Nov. 12—President Nixon drew applause from both sides of Capitol Hill today for accelerating troop withdrawals, but Congressional doves expressed concern that the Administration was becoming committed to maintaining a residual force in South Vietnam.

The expressed concern of both Republican and Democratic doves fell short of outright criticism of the President's announced withdrawal plans for the next two months. On the basis of the initial reaction to the President's announcement, therefore, it was unclear whether Mr. Nixon had again succeeded in mollifying Congressional criticism or had contributed to the Congressional drive to impose a withdrawal deadline upon the White House.

Humphrey Comments

The potential point of difference—and one that could revive the Vietnam debate in Congress—was over the President's announced intention to maintain a residual force in Vietnam until there was a negotiated settlement of the war.

Administration supporters—such as the Senate's Republican leader, Hugh Scott, and the House Republican leader, Gerald L. Ford—see this Presidential position as presenting an opportunity to negotiate a settlement of the war with North Vietnam.

This argument was accepted at least in part by Senator Hubert H. Humphrey, the Dem-

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ocratic Presidential candidate in 1968, who observed that the possibility of maintaining a residual force should present "a new opportunity to negotiate with North Vietnam a total withdrawal and release of prisoners of war."

But the concern of many of the doves was that the President, by relating a residual force to a negotiated settlement, was dooming any chance of successful negotiations and in the process being forced away from the goal of total withdrawal.

Typical of this concern was the reaction of the Senate majority leader Mike Mansfield, who has been seeking through a series of amendments to establish the policy that the United States will withdraw all its forces in six months, contingent upon the release of American prisoners of war.

Expressing concern over the President's reference to a residual force, Senator Mansfield said the President's announcement was "an accentuation of present policy rather than a basic change in policy."

At the same time, Senator Mansfield said the direction is the right one and I hope more encouraging news will come at the end of January."

Javits Concerned

Similarly, Senator Jacob K. Javits, Republican of New York, said that the President "is entitled to great credit for bringing out an overwhelming majority of the forces." But he expressed "disappointment" over the plan for a residual force, which he said carried with it "a trip-wire possibility of bringing us back in" and "implies a certain underwriting of the Saigon Government."

Senator John Sherman Cooper of Kentucky, a leader among Republican doves, said: "I can't be critical of the President for a policy that means withdrawing 420,000 men. Compared to the policy before, it is a tremendous effort.

"But I still believe the maintenance of a residual force will preclude the possibility of a negotiated settlement and will not secure the release of prisoners of war," he said.

On the other side of the Vietnam issue, Senator John Stennis, chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, said the President's announcement "indicates to me that things are really moving a little faster than once thought toward withdrawal."

'Concession to Peace'

Supporting the retention of a residual force until prisoners of war were released, the Mississippi Democrat said, "This indicates the President thinks the prospects for negotiations have improved at least a little."

In some Congressional quarters, there was disappointment that the President had limited himself to withdrawals for the next two months and had not committed himself to a longer-range goal of withdrawal. To an extent Senator Scott had contributed to this disappointment by predicting in recent weeks that the President, with his November announcement, would "pull the rug out from under" Senator Mansfield and other doves who were supporting legislation setting forth a six-month deadline for total withdrawal.

Describing the President's announcement today as "a con-

cession to peace and an opportunity to accelerate the peace," Senator Scott said that by limiting himself to two months, the President would gain opportunity to do three things: assess the prospects of a negotiated settlement, evaluate enemy intentions and capabilities in the dry season next year and review South Vietnamese capabilities.

At the same time, the Senate Republican Leader said that "the war is being wound down more rapidly and therefore there is less reason for restrictive language" by the Senate. "The President is doing better than the restrictions proposed by some of his critics would have accomplished," he declared.

The President's announcement, however, did not appear to have averted an attempt in the House to attach to the defense appropriations bill an amendment cutting off all funds for American forces in Indochina after next June 1 if prisoners of war were released by then. Rep. Edward P. Boland, Democrat of Massachusetts, said that he planned to offer the amendment when the appropriations bill is brought up before the House on Tuesday.

Hughes and Bayh Critical

Among those critical of the President's plan were Democratic Senators Harold E. Hughes of Iowa and Birch Bayh of Indiana. Senator Hughes termed the withdrawal rate disappointing and said they provide "no indication of any termination of this war."

"It seems to me we should shoot for total withdrawal," Senator Bayh said. "That's the only way we are going to get a negotiated settlement and return of the prisoners of war."

The National Peace Action Coalition, the nation's principal antiwar organization, expressed disappointment over the rate of troop withdrawals and announced that an antiwar convention would be held in Cleveland on Dec. 3-5 to plan new demonstrations.

A spokesman for the coalition, Gerald Gordon, said that the President's announcement proves he has no intention of ending United States military involvement in Indochina.

A spokesman for Common Cause, the principal citizens' group pressing Congress to fix a withdrawal date, said the organization would "lobby intensely" in behalf of both the Mansfield and Boland amendments, despite the new troop withdrawals.