



AP Wirephoto

SEN. JOHN STENNIS
'This is a crucial time'

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Sen. Stennis Says Fate of Hue Is Vital

SF Chronicle

Washington

The North Vietnamese would have "a running start to Saigon if Hue falls," Senator John Stennis said yesterday.

The Mississippi Democrat, chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, indicated that the fall of the South Vietnamese former imperial capital "could be the big push" that would topple the Thieu government.

Increased American air support, Stennis said, even the renewed bombing of Hanoi or Haiphong or the blockade of the Haiphong harbor, would not provide immediate relief to the South Vietnamese troops. They must now stand and fight themselves, Stennis said.

"It's up to the South Vietnamese," he said.

Stennis made the comments on the ABC radio-television program, "Issues and Answers."

KPFA News

transcribed from tape

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Democratic Senator John Stennis from Mississippi, the chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, was interviewed today on the ABC program, "Issues and Answers." He said that President Nixon is considering some new moves to combat the North Vietnamese offensive.

He said, "This is a crucial, critical time," but he said that there is nothing the U.S. can do quickly to support the South Vietnamese. He said increased American air support, including the renewed bombing of Hanoi or Haiphong, or the blockade of the Haiphong harbor, would not provide immediate relief to the South Vietnamese troops. He said the only thing the U.S. could do now is, in his words, "damage North Vietnam's will to win." He said that bombing dikes in North Vietnam might do that.

Asked what he thinks President Nixon's recall from Europe of Secretary of State William P. Rogers might mean, Stennis said the Nixon administration apparently is considering some new moves in Southeast Asia to combat the enemy offensive which has taken control of the northernmost province in South Vietnam, captured the province's capital, Quang Tri, and is threatening to do the same to Hue.

"This is a crucial, critical time," Stennis said, but there is nothing we can do "real quick" to bail out the South Vietnamese "unless it is to damage North Vietnam's will." In response to a question, Stennis mentioned bombing the dikes in North Vietnam as one move that possibly could break Hanoi's will to win.

Associated Press