

STENNIS TO SEEK WAR POWER CURB

Plans Resolution to Restrain
President, Excluding the
Conflict in Indochina

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WASHINGTON, May 9—Senator John C. Stennis, who has been a strong advocate of the Vietnam policies of Presidents Johnson and Nixon, said today that he would sponsor legislation that would prohibit a President from involving the United States in another extended war without Congressional approval.

The legislation would not apply to any Presidential action related to the current conflict in Indochina, Mr. Stennis said, but it would set "ground rules" for the future.

Senator Stennis, a Democrat from Mississippi, is chairman of the Armed Services Committee and has considerable influence on military matters.

Under his proposal, a President could send troops to war without a declaration of war only to repel an attack against

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the United States or to protest Americans abroad.

In these instances, the troops would have to be withdrawn within 30 days unless Congress had approved the action.

Senator Stennis said in a radio and television interview on the American Broadcasting Company's "Issues and Answer's" program that the purpose of his resolution was to put "the responsibility [for a war] where it belongs, on the people's representatives."

"I am interested and have been for a long while in returning more strictly to the Constitution of the United States, which plainly says Congress shall have the power to declare war," Mr. Stennis said.

His proposal is similar to legislation offered earlier this year by Senator Jacob K. Javits, Republican of New York, and by Senator Thomas F. Eagleton, Democrat of Missouri.

But the Javits measure would restrict the President from entering into new hostilities in Southeast Asia, while Senator Stennis and Senator Eagleton would specifically exclude anything related to the conflict in Indochina.

Shuns Vietnam Debate

Senator Stennis said he would exempt any Presidential initiative "that is immediately and directly connected with the war that is now going on" because he did not "want to foul up and smoke up the resolution with a debate about the present war."

He added that one advantage of requiring a declaration of war was that it would force Congress to give deeper consideration to military actions.

If the 1964 Gulf of Tonkin resolution, which President Johnson used as his authority for expanding the war in Vietnam, had been explicitly a declaration of war, Senator Stennis said, "there would have been a great deal more consideration given to it."

It is not clear what position the Nixon Administration will take on the Stennis proposal. The Administration has resisted other Congressional moves, such as the Cooper-Church amendment, which prohibits the use of United States ground troops in Cambodia, as intrusions on the President's powers as Commander in Chief.

Close to Pentagon

Senator Stennis did not say whether he had discussed his proposal with the Administration or with military leaders. He is normally close to the Pentagon, however, and observers here said that they would be surprised if he had not at least obtained assurances that the military would not vigorously oppose the measure.

Mr. Stennis said he believed his proposal would "take a year of debate and discussion."

Mr. Stennis has been searching for some time for legislation that would restrict the unlimited power of Presidents to involve the nation in wars but that would not hamper Presidential initiatives in the Indochina conflict.

He said in a speech last January in Jackson, Miss., that he "totally rejected the concept advocated from time to time that the President has certain inherent powers as Commander in Chief which enables him to extensively commit major forces to combat without Congressional consent."

More recently, the Armed Services Committee, under Senator Stennis's leadership, approved legislation that would limit draft calls to 150,000 men a year unless Congress raised the ceiling or the President declared that urgent national security reasons required more draftees.

The provision is part of the draft-extension legislation on which the Senate is expected to begin debate tomorrow.

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