

Stennis Warns

'South Viets Losing War'

Examiner News Services

WASHINGTON — The member of Congress closest to top-level military and civilian thinking in the Pentagon has warned that the South Vietnamese are losing the war and may collapse without help from U.S. ground troops.

Sen. John Stennis (D-Miss.), chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, said yesterday the "battle is being lost . . . there is a crisis there now of the greatest kind."

He told the Senate in the grimmest speech he has ever given on the war that it "will be awfully hard for them (the South Vietnamese), without assistance from our ground troops, to recover from these crushing blows."

Up to Nixon

Stennis made it clear that he opposed the reintroduction of U.S. combat forces and said he did not "think the President has anything like that in mind, based on what he has been saying."

However, he appealed to Congress not to interfere with Nixon's conduct of the war — say, by specifically prohibiting the use of U.S. troops — but to "keep the responsibility on him."

"If worse comes to worst," Stennis declared, "it's going to lead to a great humiliation. (The American people don't want to be driven out. They don't want to leave like a whipped dog."

Reds Roll On

Stennis, who is regarded in the Pentagon as the most knowledgeable and influential member of Congress in defense affairs, noted that the North Vietnamese continue to advance despite the massive use of U.S. Airpower.

His remarks reflected a growing skepticism throughout the government as to the effectiveness of airpower.

Stennis was the leadoff speaker as the senate began a debate on legislation to cut off funds for the war. He introduced an amendment to knock the anti-war measure out of a State Department authorization bill written by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

Cut Off Funds

Sens. Clifford Case (R-N.J.) and Frank Church (D-Idaho) are the authors of the antiwar measure. It would cut off all funds for land, sea or air combat in Vietnam by Dec. 31, 1972, contingent on the release of U.S. prisoners of war.

Doubts about South Vietnam's fighting ability also came from another unexpected Senate quarter as Republican whip Robert P. Griffin, a supporter of administration war policy, expressed similar doubts. But he argued strongly against a cutoff.

"The South Vietnamese forces may not be able to hack it," Griffin said, "but to vote for a cutoff, though it would not be effective until Dec. 31, would undercut President Nixon and encourage the enemy."