

NEW SAIGON FUNDS FOUGHT IN SENATE

MAR 20 1974

Kennedy Group Expects to
Block Administration Move
to Increase Arms Aid

NYTimes

By JOHN W. FINNEY
Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, March 19—
Concerted opposition began developing in the Senate today to the Administration's request for a \$474-million emergency increase in military aid to South Vietnam.

A group of Senators, mainly from the ranks of the Vietnam "doves" of the past, protested to the Senate Armed Services Committee that expansion of military aid to South Vietnam would be a perpetuation of the policy of military involvement in Indochina that was supposed to have come to an end with the Vietnam cease-fire agreement.

The Defense Department has warned that it was running out of military aid funds for the Saigon Government, saying that by mid-April the South Vietnamese forces would have to curtail severely their military operations.

As a stopgap, the Administration has asked Congress to raise the spending ceiling on military aid to South Vietnam this fiscal year to \$1.6-billion from the \$1.126-billion set by Congress last year.

The Senate opposition is focusing on an amendment offered by Senator Edward M. Kennedy, Democrat of Massachusetts, and Senator James B. Pearson, Republican of Kansas, that would block the increased military aid sought by the Administration as part of a \$6.2-billion supplementary appropriation for the Defense Department.

Kennedy Views Policies

Senator Kennedy told the Senate Armed Services Committee that the question before the Senate was whether the increased military aid for South Vietnam "is consistent with the new realities of Southeast Asia and 'peace with honor' or whether it perpetuates an old relationship and reflects policies that have not really changed."

Senator Kennedy's answer was that "the Administration's priorities in Indochina remain more with funding the arms of war than with assistance to heal the wounds of war" and that continued "massive" military aid to South Vietnam "borders on fiscal irresponsibility."

To the Administration's principal argument the increase in military aid was dictated by inflation, particularly in the price of oil imported by South Vietnam at American expense, Senator Kennedy replied:

"I can only say that inflation begins at home. And the housewife in Massachusetts must wonder at our Government's worry over the effects of inflation in Saigon, when the cost of bread and milk in Boston is climbing every day."

Taking up another theme of the Senate opposition, Senator Alan Cranston, Democrat of California, told the committee: "We must now stop wasting American dollars there, too."

Goldwater Indicates Shift

Senator Cranston, who is organizing the support behind the Kennedy-Pearson amendment, expressed confidence in an interview that a clear Senate majority could be mustered in the Senate to block the Administration's request.

As analyzed by Senator Cranston, among the political factors working against the Administration's request are a weariness with South Vietnam issues now that American troops have been withdrawn, a wariness that aid could once again lead to military involvement, and a feeling that increased aid would only take money away from domestic programs.

Indicative to Senator Cranston of the tide of sentiment was a suggestion by Senator Barry Goldwater, Republican of Arizona, during the hearings that he could support the Kennedy-Pearson amendment. Senator Goldwater, who normally supports the Pentagon position, said at one point: "We can scratch South Vietnam. It is imminent that South Vietnam is going to fall into the hands of North Vietnam."

The Administration's argument is that the increased military aid is necessary to maintain a tenuous military balance in South Vietnam and that without the aid an investment of billions of dollars and tens of thousands of lives may be wasted.

As Pentagon officials have acknowledged, however, the military aid program got into the present budgetary bind partly because the Defense Department overspent on the assumption that Congress would provide the full amount of military aid originally requested for South Vietnam.

Cranston's Last Voyage