

SEChronicle  
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Vet Training  
of Saudis

Washington...

Two senators yesterday called for a congressional investigation of the \$77 million Defense Department contract under which a Los Angeles company would recruit U.S. Army veterans to train Saudi Arabian troops.

"You can be sure there will be an investigation," said Senator Henry Jackson (Dem-Wash). He said he will ask Senator John Stennis (Dem-Miss.), chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, to hold hearings on the matter.

Jackson said he was "completely baffled" by the contract, disclosed Saturday by the Associated Press.

Senator Hubert H. Humphrey (Dem-Minn.), also called for a congressional investigation.

"What is needed is for the

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Defense Department to reveal details of the contract to Congress," Humphrey said in a telephone interview from his home in Waverly, Minn.

Humphrey added: "The possibility of having American forces training another country's troops in the Middle East is fraught with danger. I really don't think we should engage in it."

The 26,000-man internal security force to be trained by a 1000-member contingent from Vinnell Corp. in mechanized infantry techniques is primarily responsible for protection of Saudi Arabia's oil fields.

The United States will provide the military equipment (including 105-mm. howitzers) under a \$335 million contract signed with Saudi Arabia in 1974.

Vinnell officials have denied they are creating a "mercenary force," stressing they are simply setting up a training operation and not hiring anyone actually to "pull triggers."

"I couldn't even imagine such an action," Walby said, "but it seems to me that would end many involvement of ours in the program."

Secretary of State Henry Kissinger last month dropped a scarcely veiled hint that the United States might consider military force in the Middle East if the Arabs try to strangle the West with a new oil embargo.

Walby, who joined the Vin-

nell Corp. upon retiring as commander of the Fourth Advanced Individual Training Brigade and Training Command at Ft. Ord after 30 years service, said he has seen no instructions dealing with any such eventuality.

But Walby said from his Pebble Beach home: "On a range of perhaps 35 things that could happen, I would say that would be at the bottom of the list."

Walby, a much-decorated Vietnam veteran, said he was being besieged by calls, many from job seekers.

He said none of his callers was "getting after me" about the training program, although "with this kind of thing, you could probably expect some reaction from a broad range. I have had no negative reaction whatever."

He said he feels the former American soldiers hired to handle the Saudi Arabian training will accomplish more than U.S. military aid did in Southeast Asia.

Associated Press