

The election eye . . .

# Church scores points on Soviet troop issue

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By BEN J. PLASTINO

Post-Register political editor

The startling disclosure last week by U.S. Sen. Frank Church, D-Idaho, of Soviet combat troop buildup in Cuba was politically fortuitous for him.

**The wily Idaho senior senator took full advantage of this stroke of luck in the announcement from his Boise home, and, of course, it became a hot nationwide news item which will linger on.**

The charge by Rep. George Hansen, R-Idaho, that Church made the announcement at his Boise home to help his re-election bid next year has considerable merit.

Hansen Thursday wrote Church expressing dismay as the failure of the federal intelligence agencies for either its lack of knowledge or coverup in the situation. He then urged delay in re ratifying the SALT II treaty, implementing the Panama treaty and in normalizing relations with Cuba until the troops are removed.

Rep. Steve Symms, R-Idaho, who is eying the senatorial seat, sought to minimize the announcement by saying the Idaho Republican congressional delegation had been voicing concern over Soviet intervention throughout the world for many years.

Don Todd, controversial chairman of the Anybody But Church Committee, also scoffed at the announcement and said it was done only to help Church with his re-election campaign.

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**Church, as chairman of the prestigious Senate Foreign Relations Committee, is making political capital of this disclosure.**

He has called committee hearings and already Secretary of State Cyrus R. Vance has testified he would not be satisfied with maintenance of the status quo regarding the USSR combat troops in Cuba.

Church said the panel wants to know how long Soviet troops have been in Cuba, what their mission is and what the implications are for the United States and other nations of the Western Hemisphere. These



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## *The Soviet connection*

**SENATE FOREIGN Relations Chairman Frank Church, D-Idaho, held "emergency news conference" at his Boise home recently to say that 2,300 to 3,000 Soviet troops are now in Cuba. He urged President Carter to insist on the immediate withdrawal of the Russian troops.**

are perfectly legitimate questions.

President Carter and other influential government leaders express grave concern and hope the USSR removes the troops.

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**The biggest impact is the indication that Church is not soft to the Soviets, as many of his critics have repeatedly charged. It likely places him in a popular position with most Americans and Idahoans, to oppose what appears Soviet encroachment in the Western Hemisphere in general and the United States in particular.**

In fact it was in Cuba, 90 miles away, that the United States should have taken action against Communist aggression a decade of years ago, rather

than in Vietnam, 6,000 miles distant, against people who had never done this nation any harm.

As committee chairman, Church's role and responsibilities transcend those of being strictly a senator from Idaho. He must look at the overall national implications, much as he did in his controversial position favoring the Panama Canal Treaties, and favoring the SALT II Treaty.

This latest episode, however, could cause him to take an adversary SALT II treaty stand unless the issue is satisfactorily settled.

It's still more than a year away from the November, 1980, general elections and neither Church nor Symms have even announced. If the campaign is this hot so early, it should be a corker a year hence.

So far, such clumsy efforts by the Anybody But Church Committee for Positive Action, American Conservative Union and other extreme groups are helping, rather than hindering Church. The charges that Todd and Helen Chenoweth, the positive action committee chairman, are mounting such campaigns of distortion for employment gains carry merit.

**The only one who seems waging a viable and sensible campaign is Symms himself, whose conduct so far is along positive lines. If such insane efforts by such radical groups persist, it could influence Symms to forego the senatorial challenge and instead seek the safe course for re-election.**