Church says SALT II has only 50-50 chance of passage

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Sen. Frank Church, D-Idaho, chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, said Friday the SALT II Treaty appears to have only a 50-50 chance of passage.

In a telephone interview to The Post-Register from his Washington office, Church said he arrived at this conclusion after considering the prospects of passing amendments and resolutions that will be accepted by a large number of wavering senators, including himself.

Church said he agrees with California Sen. Allan Cranston's headcount — that at present the treaty ratification is 35 votes short of the necessary 67, while the opposition, in turn, is 17 shy of the 34 needed to reject the treaty. Between 17 and 32 senators are undecided, he said.

Church, was, at one time, to lead the debate for the treaty, but cooled off after being apprised of the presence of a Russian combat brigade of some 2,000-3,000 troops in Cuba.

He said his acceptance depends on two salient provisions.

This includes (1) the president must first affirm that those Soviet troops in Cuba are no longer engaged in combat maneuvers; and (2) that the Russian military presence in Cuba shall not become a threat to other countries in the Caribbean, or elsewhere in the Western Hemisphere.

Gives talk

Church pointed out he had delivered a speech in the Senate this week which laid out the case pointing out such acts serve as a Russian shield for Castro to foment revolutions in the Caribbean and other nations of Central America.

"Our failure to respond to provocation means that Castro would be encouraged in the future to take an even more active revolutionary role," said Church. "He would cultivate the seedbed for revolutions among people plagued with poverty, hunger and disease."

Such provisions as he espouses would be related to, but not an actual part of the text of the treaty, explained Church.

"The provisions I have set forth mean the Russians must give out objective evidence, backed up by our intelligence agency, that there are no Russian combat troops in Cuba," he said.

Church said one group of senators, like himself, won't vote for the treaty unless the issue of Russian combat troops in Cuba is satisfactorily resolved.

Military spending

Another group supports the treaty, but links it with an increase in defense budget spending. They believe the treaty does not accomplish much in the ways of arms control, and they are interested in SALT II provisions calling for substantial reductions.

Then there is another group, which generally opposes the treaty in nearly any form.

Church then pointed out that some of the amendments may or may not be accepted by the USSR.

Church said Senate committee, of which he is chairman, completed hearings Friday. The coming week will consist of "mark up," or considering many proposed amendments, reservations and other standing.

Some of the amendments, said Church, are intended to kill the treaty outright.

"It now depends on the decisions of the committee how the treaty will be presented in its final form," Church said.

To finish soon

"I hope my work can be done by Nov. 1, and then it will be up to the majority leader when to call the Senate for treaty action.

"What is proposed is an understanding which is binding on our own government and this would be attached to a resolution of consent. It would be an understanding that before the treaty takes effect, the must affirm the non- of Soviet combat Russia and that the itary presence would not become a threat."

Church concluded by saying it will be up to the full Senate then to strengthen and rectify the treaty.

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