

Congress urges accounting of attack on Stark

From news services

WASHINGTON — With little dissent and no debate, the Senate voted yesterday to require President Reagan to give Congress a full accounting of risks and security arrangements for U.S. ships in the Persian Gulf before signing any agreement with Kuwait to escort its oil tankers.

Also yesterday, State Department spokesman Charles E. Redman said U.S. investigators from the Pentagon and State Department will leave soon for Baghdad, Iraq, for a joint investigation with Iraq into the Stark attack.

"We will be sharing with the Iraqis our own version of the incident and would expect the Iraqis to do the same with us," Redman said.

The investigators particularly want to interview the pilot of the Mirage F-1 fighter that fired the missiles which blasted a hole in the port side of the U.S. frigate.

Iraq has agreed to allow a Pentagon-State Department delegation to interview the pilot. The delegation also will consult with Iraqi leaders to determine appropriate reparations for the loss of life and damage to the frigate.

A State Department spokesman said yesterday that a formal request has been sent to Iraqi officials, asking

(See PRESIDENT, Page A-11)

ATTACK ON THE USS STARK

President defends policy in Persian Gulf

(From Page A-1)

them to pay for repairs to the Stark and compensation for the victims' families. The administration declined to say whether any specific amount was requested.

Reagan, meanwhile, spent part of his day voicing a renewed commitment to using U.S. military might in keeping the "particularly volatile" Persian Gulf shipping lanes open.

"This week we were given a grim reminder of the human cost of our national security," the president said, referring to the Sunday attack on the Stark that killed 37 sailors.

"As we grieve the loss of our brave sons, let no one doubt our resolve to protect our vital interests in the Persian Gulf or anywhere else," Reagan said. "The gulf is a particularly volatile area ... it's an area of utmost importance to us and the free world."

Reagan's remarks to a gathering of oil company executives came soon after the Senate voiced its bipartisan concern, in a 91-5 vote, about the administration's intent to put Kuwaiti tankers under U.S. flag protection.

Growing congressional concerns about Reagan's Middle East policy and his military strategy apparently prompted the administration to delay its lobbying campaign for a proposed \$500 million sale of arms and

F-15 fighters to Saudi Arabia.

White House spokesman Marlin Fitzwater said yesterday that the administration will delay plans to send informal notification to Congress of the intended sale because of "political and other factors."

"This is very important to us," Fitzwater said, "and we want to move this proposal to the Hill at the most propitious time to get its passage."

On Capitol Hill, Sen. Dennis DeConcini, D-Ariz., and Frank R. Lautenberg, D-N.J., introduced Wednesday a resolution to halt the sale of 12 additional F-15s after two Saudi Air Force pilots failed to intercept the Iraqi jet.

The Saudis said the intercept did not occur because their pilots were awaiting needed approval from superiors.

"We didn't get help from the Saudis when we needed it," Majority Leader Robert Byrd, D-W.Va., said yesterday, adding his support to the legislation.

While endorsing the idea of U.S. involvement in the Persian Gulf, Byrd said he and other members of Congress think Reagan needs to tell Congress and the American people how he intends to protect U.S. servicemen and their ships.

"The issue is how to avoid a repetition of the Stark tragedy and still pursue American interests in the

Persian Gulf," Byrd said. "If we have to err, it should be on the side of extra security, extra protection, for our men in uniform and our ships."

"We need to make sure we have adequate procedures in place," said Minority Leader Bob Dole, R-Kan.

Under the Byrd-Dole proposal, Reagan could make no agreement with Kuwait before the secretary of defense gives Congress a detailed assessment of threats to U.S. ships in the Persian Gulf, outlines rules and procedures being used by the Navy to defend its ships, and makes known any agreements the United States has negotiated or contemplates with European allies or the other Persian Gulf nations.

● Richard W. Murphy, an assistant secretary of state, defended the administration's decision to put the U.S. flag and U.S. captains aboard Kuwaiti oil tankers, which also will be offered the protection of U.S. naval power in the gulf.

● Murphy also cautioned Iran that an attack on U.S. naval forces in the gulf would open a new dimension to its war with Iraq. "We believe that Iran would be reluctant to engage the U.S. militarily because of concern over our response," Murphy said, but added in view of the deepening U.S. involvement in the region, "There is a risk there, we don't deny it."

So far this year, Iran has attacked

20 ships in the gulf. At least 16 had a connection with Kuwait.

● Pentagon officials disclosed that Iraqi defense officials have told U.S. Embassy officials the warplane that attacked the Stark fired two French-made Exocet missiles at the frigate. The officials, who asked not to be named, said the Defense Department was not sure what to make of the Iraqi report, because the Mirage F-1 fighters used by Iraq are supposed to be capable of carrying only one Exocet at a time.

● The Senate, by voice vote, gave final congressional approval to a resolution making Monday, Memorial Day, a day of remembrance to the sailors killed on the Stark. The House voted unanimously to honor the crewmen earlier in the day.

● U.S. investigators also are checking an unexploded Exocet missile warhead, discovered Wednesday aboard the Stark, and reports that Iraqi fighters approached the naval destroyer USS Waddell when it went to help the Stark.

● In West Germany, U.S. forensic experts worked yesterday to identify 11 bodies among the 35 shipped there from the Stark. In addition to the 35, two other crewmen are missing and presumed dead. Twenty-one sailors were wounded. The bodies will be shipped to Dover Air Force Base in Delaware when identification is complete.