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ASSERTS U.S. CAN WITHHOLD NEWS, NOT LIE

Pentagon Aid Testifies on Flow of Data

BY FRED FARRAR
(Chicago Tribune Press Service)

Washington, Aug. 31—Arthur Sylvester, assistant secretary of defense for public affairs, said today that the government has a right to withhold information during times of national peril, but that it does not have the right to lie.

Sylvester, the Pentagon information chief who has been accused of news management and of guerrilla warfare against newsmen, made the statement in an appearance before the Senate foreign relations committee.

The occasion was the second in a series of public hearings the committee is holding on government information policies in South Viet Nam.

Exchange Is Mild

It had been expected that Sylvester would be questioned closely on charges of news management by the administration, but with one exception the exchange was mild: Sen. J. William Fulbright, [D., Ark.], chairman of the committee, agreed with Sylvester's contention that if anyone is managing the news, it is the newspapers and radio and television stations.

The exception came when Sen. Joseph H. Clark [D., Pa.] told Sylvester that he thought the administration's news policies in South Viet Nam are "barbarous, revolting, manipulative, lacking in candor, and largely lacking in credibility."

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Then, in a reference to a program under which the Pentagon flew 82 American newsmen to and from South Viet Nam between July of 1964 and August of last year, Clark said he didn't know whether "you or the CIA" [central intelligence agency] paid the costs. The senator described the "trained seals" who reported only what they were told.

Lauds Free Press

"I thank God," he added, "for the free American press which despite government policy . . . remained independent and continued to report the truth about Viet Nam."

Sylvester replied that Clark's charge was without documentation or factual support.

"I suggest," Sylvester continued, "that you are libeling a large number of newsmen by suggesting that they can be bought by a free plane ride to Viet Nam."

Sylvester made the statement about the government's right to withhold information in response to questions from Fulbright about quotations attributed to him to the effect that "the government has the right to lie to save itself" when it is facing a nuclear war.

Sylvester said the quotation

was taken out of context from a speech he gave shortly after the Cuban missile crisis.

"No government information program can be based on lies," Sylvester said. "No government

official has the right to lie, but he has the right to protect his country when it is faced by a nuclear disaster.

"He should be able to withhold information for a time if it involves the safety of the country. He should not be required to give out the information just because it was asked by the news media."

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