

O'Donnell Withheld Book on

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BOSTON Aug. 3—Kenneth P. O'Donnell said today he had withheld publication of his book on President Kennedy since 1967 because Senate Majority Leader Mike Mansfield said the book would hurt Mansfield's relationship with President Johnson.

The book, a portion of which is printed in Life magazine, reveals that President Kennedy was planning a complete withdrawal of Ameri-

can forces in Vietnam after he was re-elected in 1964.

O'Donnell, one of President Kennedy's closest aides, said in an interview in Boston today:

"In 1967, the book was supposed to be ready. I went to Washington and talked with Sen. Mansfield. He asked me not to do it. He felt he was having some influence with the President at that time, and he felt the book would just antagonize LBJ. He said he would prefer that I not publish the book then."

O'Donnell said he acceded to the request.

O'Donnell was asked why the story about the Kennedy plan for withdrawal has never been revealed before. He replies: "Actually, I've been saying it for years in response to questions, but never in quite those terms."

"I did not use Kennedy's or Mansfield's name because I felt it was a confidence," he added. "Frankly, I'm surprised it's never come out before myself."

O'Donnell said he did not think that Kennedy had ever told former Secretary of State Dean Rusk about

the plan although he believed former Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara knew if it.

He noted that the first element in the plan—"it can't really be called a plan because it wasn't that detailed"—was taken in October, 1963, when President Kennedy announced the withdrawal of 1,000 of the 16,000 American forces then stationed in Vietnam.

O'Donnell said that so far as he could recall the withdrawal plan was never presented in clear terms to the National Security Council. O'Donnell attended the Na-

JFK at Mansfield's Request

tional Security Council sessions, he said.

Among others who knew of the Kennedy withdrawal plan was former Sen. Benjamin Smith of Massachusetts, who is the campaign manager in O'Donnell's race for the Democratic nomination for governor of Massachusetts.

Robert Kennedy also knew of the plan. But O'Donnell said the New York Senator decided not to say anything about it in his 1968 presidential bid because it would look "cheesy."

O'Donnell explained that

he was working for Robert Kennedy at the time, and their feeling was that any such revelation would be termed a bit of "phony history" manufactured by O'Donnell in behalf of his candidate.

The book has been in the making since 1964. O'Donnell said, "I dictated everything in this book to (NBC newsmen) Sander Vanocur in 1964. We went down to Florida for a month and I dictated one million words, chronologically, on my association with Jack Kennedy."

O'Donnell said the book

went through a series of stumbling blocks after that.

Lawrence F. O'Brien, the Democratic National Chairman and former Postmaster General, dropped out as co-author with O'Donnell and presidential aide David Powers. And Vanocur dropped out because of the press of NBC duties.

O'Donnell said originally Look magazine had a contract to serialize the book, which is to be published by Little Brown. However, when Vanocur and O'Brien dropped out, the contract was ripped up. In 1968, Time Inc. bought Little Brown.

And Life magazine subsequently negotiated serialization rights.

O'Donnell said the book was planned to be published in September, but ran into trouble because of the need for extensive checking of facts with each politician named in the book. He pointed out that Sargent Shriver, former ambassador to France, had just approved portions of the book in which he is named.

O'Donnell said he didn't want to wait that long and Life told him that they would go ahead with serialization as planned in August