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White House Memo Cites CBS Faking

By Jack Anderson

A caustic White House memo, intended for internal use only, accuses the Columbia Broadcasting System of "irresponsibility" and questions whether the Federal Communications Commission should investigate.

All that holds back the White House from referring the charges to the FCC, an aide told this column, is concern that the motive might be misunderstood.

Since Vice President Agnew's attack upon the TV networks, CBS has been the boldest about continuing its criticism of the Nixon administration. Some aides fear, therefore, that an FCC investigation would look like an attempt to intimidate CBS.

The White House memo, charging that CBS has been involved in "highly questionable activity," cites these alleged incidents:

The CBS news department (1) faked horror scenes from Vietnam on at least three occasions; (2) planned "a staged invasion" of Haiti; (3) "staged incidents of police brutality" during the 1968 Democratic convention; and (4) arranged to film an illegal "pot party" in Chicago.

'Fraud by the Press'

The memo suggests tartly that CBS shouldn't be allowed to use "freedom of the press"

to get away with "fraud by the press."

Attached to the memo is a report from the Pentagon on the phony horror scenes. The most dramatic was an Oct. 7, 1967, film of a GI attempting to slice the ear off a dead enemy soldier.

Alleges the Pentagon report: "Don Webster and John Smith of CBS were involved in an incident in which a soldier attempted to cut off the ear of a dead enemy soldier with a knife furnished by Smith."

After the film was shown on the Walter Cronkite news show, Specialist George A. Pawlaszky was arrested for the deed. Continues the Pentagon report:

"Both Smith and Webster were subpoenaed at the trial . . . but neither appeared . . . Specialist Pawlaszky was found guilty as charged. At the request of the American Embassy, no further action was taken against Smith, who was listed as a principal in the case."

Two years after the ear-cutting episode, the same Don Webster narrated another knife scene. A South Vietnamese soldier was filmed on Nov. 3, 1969, stabbing a captured Vietcong in the presence of U.S. personnel.

'Cut and Paste' Job

The Pentagon report alleges that Webster refused to cooperate with the Army investiga-

tion, "claiming protection of news sources." The investigation "established that the film was taken by a Vietnamese and that Webster was not present during the filming."

The American Embassy later reported that "the CBS film was a 'cut and paste' job involving different locales and personnel." The Army was "unsuccessful in gaining the assistance of CBS during the investigation. To date, the personnel involved in the incident have not been identified."

Again on Feb. 17, 1970, CBS showed a South Vietnamese soldier "covering the face of a detainee with a towel and pouring water on it, thereby restricting his breathing. Also included was a brief shot of an alleged U.S. adviser watching the incident."

But CBS again refused to cooperate with the Army investigators who, consequently, "have been unable to identify the personnel involved." In contrast, NBC furnished the Army with full information about a filmed beating incident that a U.S. officer watched, leading to disciplinary action.

CBS news director Gordon Manning explained to the Defense Department: "It is our policy to protect the security of our people in the field and the sanctity of news judgment and editing processes."

From his analysis of the

Hue massacre Pike outlines what he believes would happen if the Communists were to win decisively in South Vietnam and he stresses the word decisively. First, all foreigners would be cleared out immediately and especially the several hundred foreign newsmen reporting from there. A curtain of ignorance would descend and the outside world would know little or nothing of what was happening.

Behind that curtain the night of the longknives would begin. All political opposition, actual or potential, would be systematically eliminated. Then would come personal revenge, a small wheel turning within the larger wheel of Communist retribution, as Pike puts it.

Since this report was prepared for the U.S. mission in Saigon it may be discounted. In the opinion of this observer, a carefully planned and thought-out program of asylum, with far more reality than is now in sight, must be evolved. United Nations supervision is surely the smallest prerequisite. That would help to ease American withdrawal since, obviously, given the state of opinion in this country, American troops cannot remain indefinitely to insure against catastrophe.