

Bundy Favors Pullout Now, Raps Bombing

By Stuart Auerbach
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PHILADELPHIA, Dec. 30 —William P. Bundy said today that all U.S. combat troops should be gone from Vietnam by now.

"We still have a very significant presence there," said Bundy, who was assistant secretary of state in charge of the American involvement in Vietnam.

"I would have liked to have seen it brought to zero much sooner than this," he said in a press conference following a tough two-hour interrogation by antiwar scientists at the American Association for the Advancement of Science meeting here.

Bundy, in his press conference, also opposed the current wave of bombing raids over North Vietnam. "I would doubt their usefulness very much indeed," he said.

Under questioning by the unruly antiwar scientists, Bundy said he favors setting a firm date for the withdrawal of all U.S. combat forces from Vietnam and would tie the date to the release of American prisoners.

He said he is not sure about leaving a "small" American training detachment in Vietnam, he said the United States should continue its support — economic and political — of the Thieu government.

Bundy, who left his State Department post in May 1969, admitted that the Johnson administration made "considerable mistakes" in not fully informing the American people

about its Vietnam policy.

"More candor," he said "would have removed the rancid atmosphere which has so poisoned things over the past few years."

But Bundy denied that President Johnson and members of his administration lied about the Tonkin Gulf incident, which led to the Senate resolution expanding U.S. participation in the war.

Bundy said, "The senior members of the administration believed that attacks had taken place, that North Vietnam had acted to challenge the United States."

"The question of manipulation or deception doesn't really stand up. There may have been error in reading intelligence information, but the American people were told exactly what the administration believed."

He said he disapproved, however, of using the Tonkin Gulf resolution "to justify

scales of action that had not been contemplated . . . at the time. The resolution was strained far beyond its true purport."

While calling the present policy a failure, Bundy said the United States was justified in moving into Vietnam in force in 1965.

At that time, he said, China was considered a real threat in Southeast Asia. Since then, he said, China has calmed its bellicose foreign policy and political conditions among the Southeast Asian nations have stabilized.

Bundy's admissions of past mistakes failed to satisfy the antiwar scientists, who made up more than half of the audience of about 300. They interrupted him constantly, and often stood up to cite "facts" that they said contradicted his views.

The participants in the meeting—Bundy; Leslie Gelb, director of the Pentagon group that prepared a history of the American intervention in Southeast Asia; and Morton H. Halperin, a former Defense Department analyst — had planned to sit on a podium in front of the room.

Before they arrived, however, members of the antiwar group, Science for the People, rearranged the room so that the participants were encircled by the audience.

The heckling varied from shouts of "murderer" and "liar" to questions as to whether Bundy would be willing to stand trial as a war criminal before an international tribunal.

Halperin ended the session abruptly when the dissidents refused to allow Gelb to read a prepared statement.

At that point, Bundy had been under intense questioning for about two hours.

As the session broke up, plainclothesmen escorted Bundy through a rear door. Bundy went directly to a nearby room for the press conference.

Jeremy Stone, director of the liberal Federation of American Scientists, called the event a "peoples' trial" of Bundy and criticized the AAS for allowing it to go on.

Bundy, however, said he didn't feel it was a "peoples' trial" and he termed the heckling mild. "I had no problem with it," he said. "I've been heckled before. I would have been happy to continue."



United Press International

William P. Bundy attempts to answer a question during an AAAS meeting, over the heckling of antiwar scientists.

