

Underground Test Results Manipulated, Case Claims

By Marilyn Berger

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Charging that the Pentagon is manipulating and suppressing scientific data showing significant gains in the ability to detect underground nuclear tests Sen. Clifford P. Case (R-N.J.) is repleasing letters from six seismologists which he says "clearly underscore the advances which have been made."

In a speech prepared for delivery before the Senate today, Case said that he was concerned not only because the Pentagon's Advanced Research Projects Agency (ARPA) had suppressed scientific data, but because ARPA's director would be on the U.S. delegation to the disarmament talks starting Wednesday in Geneva. "I am concerned that the U.S. representatives . . . might not be as forthcoming as they might be" Case said.

His allegations grow out of the disclosure that ARPA re-

wrote the summary of a report on a mid-1970 conference at Woods Hole, Mass., where seismologists discussed the ability to distinguish underground tests from earthquakes. The new version substantially undercut the reported scientific strides discussed at the ARPA-sponsored symposium.

In the advance text of his speech Case said, "It has come to my attention that ARPA is explicitly representing its version of the summary as reflecting the judgment of the scientists who attended the conference. In a Washington Post article of June 13, an ARPA representative, attempting to explain his agency's actions, stated that the original summary failed to reflect a 'consensus' of the conference but, instead, represented the views of only one unmaned man."

He added: "This I have confirmed to be simply not true. ARPA apparently did not even bother to get in touch with the Woods Hole participants before issuing its own version of the proceedings."

The original summary had stated that with appropriate instrumentation, earthquakes registering 4 on the Richter Scale could be accurately distinguished from underground nuclear tests of an equivalent magnitude, meaning as small as one or two kilotons. The revised version which the Pentagon cleared for release says it is possible to differentiate "below" a Richter magnitude of 4.5 equivalent to about 5 to 10 kilotons.

In a letter Case has released, three seismologists from the University of California at San Diego, who saw both summaries, said, "We feel that he original summary more adequately represents our views as to the present status of the discrimination problem."

They continued, "One paragraph if the modified statement with which we strongly disagree is the statement that 'a major result of the meeting was a clear impression that much research has yet to be done . . .' On the contrary, we feel that the discrimination problem has essentially been solved down to magnitude 4.0 . . ."

The letter was signed by Professors Barry Block, James Brune and Freeman Gilbert. Another letter from three seismologists at the Lamont-Doherty Observatory at Columbia University who contributed papers to the Woods Hole symposium, said: "Our reaction to the original summary was that it adequately reported the many recent advances in seismic techniques for detection and discrimination and that it expressed our impression of what was said at Woods Hole." It was signed by Peter Molnar, Peter L. Ward and Max Wyss.

Case noted that it is "not an uncommon occurrence for scientific findings to be strongly resisted by government bureaucracies, especially when such findings conflict with entrenched interests or cause the government embarrassment. When such bureaucratic resistance is translated into overt manipulation or suppression of the frank opinion of scientists, however, it becomes an abuse of authority which cannot be tolerated."