

Northrop Flew Senators Gratis

By Patrick J. Sloyan

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Two senior senators, including the chairman of the Select Committee on Standards and Conduct, played a key role in the Northrop Corporation's getting a \$77 million Air Force contract after the firm provided them with more than \$3,300 in of free air travel.

The lawmakers Howard Cannon (D-Nev.), chairman of the Armed Services Tactical Air Power Subcommittee, and Barry M. Goldwater (R-Ariz.), the subcommittee's ranking Republican member and the 1964 GOP presidential candidate. Cannon also heads the ethics panel that investigates conflict-of-interest and other charges of impropriety against Senate members, and the Rules Committee, which that has jurisdiction over political campaign laws.

Both denied any wrongdoing.

Officials of the House and Senate Appropriations committees said the Tactical Air Power Subcommittee was the moving force behind the little-noticed transfer of a contract for 71 Northrop F-5E fighters from the South Vietnam air force to the U.S. Air Force, with most of the planes to be stationed in Cannon's home state, Nevada. The transfer left the U.S. Air Force with 71 planes it had rejected.

"It was all subject to approval by Cannon's subcommittee," said one Appropriations Committee official.

The activities came to light because Northrup, the focus of congressional investigations involving illegal campaign contributions in the United States and bribes abroad, has been required to produce a



SEN. HOWARD W. CANNON SEN. BARRY GOLDWATER
... "guests," with families, aboard Northrop jets.

mountain of financial records.

One file, dealing with Northrop's Washington office, revealed that Cannon and Goldwater made use of the firm's private jets.

Cannon, and in some instances his wife and children, were "guests" aboard Northrop jets on flights in 1971, 1972 and 1973. Airline officials estimated the five trips were worth \$1,778.

Included were flights from Washington to Las Vegas, Nev., and a round trip to Spanish Cay in the British West Indies for Cannon, his wife, and their son, Alan. "The purpose of this flight was to have certain Northrup personnel attend meetings in the Bahamas to explore a possible joint venture in which the company might participate." Northrop said in a statement included as part of a court-ordered audit. Cannon was unavailable for

comment, but a spokesman for the Senator said that Cannon did not pay for the transportation to Spanish Cay—that "he was planning to go there and this Northrop flight just cropped up."

Goldwater, and in some cases Mrs. Goldwater and their son, Rep. Barry M. Goldwater Jr. (R-Calif.), were guests on Northrop jets on trips from Washington to Phoenix and Los Angeles, and from the Paris air show to Toulouse, France, to inspect the Anglo-French supersonic transport plane—(SST). Airline officials said the trips here were worth at least \$1,571.

On one instance, Northrop flew its plane from Los Angeles to Washington, D.C., to fly Goldwater, his wife and his secretary to Phoenix. "The flight was arranged at the request of the senator's office," Northrop told the auditors. "Sen. Goldwater had just

had very serious surgery and had to lie down during the entire flight."

In an interview Wednesday, Goldwater recalled that he had his arm extended in a cast and had requested Northrop's aid after American Airlines insisted that he buy two seats for a flight home.

"Hell, I see nothing wrong with that. And I have flown on Northrop planes many times if they have a seat open," Goldwater said. He denied that the flights influenced his support for the transfer of the F-5Es to the Air Force. "I've got a lot of good friends at Northrop. They build good planes. They never tried to tempt me," he said.

In a statement Cannon said that he never solicited Northrop flights, that he was invited as a guest. "Any suggestion that any decision of mine was influenced by such travel is ridiculous and beneath comment," Cannon said.

Currently, the Air Force uses 20 T-38 trainers as mock enemy planes to train U.S. pilots at Nellis Air Force Base outside Las Vegas. At hearings March 13 before Cannon's subcommittee, Maj. Gen. Harold E. Collins, Deputy chief of staff, said the Air Force would need 20 F-5Es to replace the T-33s.

But on May 2 before the Senate Appropriations Committee, Collins said, "Because of higher priority programs, the Air Force has no plans to procure the F-5 at this time." This was after Congress had refused to vote any more South Vietnam military aid and the Pentagon dropped plans to send 71 Northrop planes to Saigon.