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FULBRIGHT CALLED WRONG ON TONKIN

Admits Error on One Point
but Calls Data Inadequate

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WASHINGTON, Feb. 26—The Department of State disputed today two lines of criticism by Senator J. W. Fulbright in his continuing battle with the Administration over the Gulf of Tonkin incidents in 1964.

One point at issue was: Did the Administration inform Congress that the two United States destroyers in the incidents were engaged in intelligence-gathering operations when they were attacked by North Vietnam on Aug. 2 and 4, 1964.

The other was: Did the Administration consult leading Senators about the text of the controversial Tonkin Gulf resolution, which President Johnson has used ever since as Congressional authorization for escalating the Vietnam war?

In television appearances and subsequent interviews yesterday, Senator Fulbright, chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, and William P. Bundy, Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs, gave contradictory answers to these questions.

On the matter of consultation, Robert J. McCloskey, State Department spokesman, offered today an excerpt from Senator Fulbright's own remarks to the Senate on Aug. 6, 1964, which high State Department officials said confirmed that the two branches of Government had cooperated on the resolution's wording.

Senator Concedes Error

According to The Congressional Record, Mr. Fulbright told the Senate:

"The original resolution proposed to certain members . . . was quite long and involved. On the advice of members of the [Foreign Relations] Committee, the Department [of State] cooperated in reducing the resolution to what we thought would be its bare essentials."

Asked about this statement, Senator Fulbright conceded that his denial of consultation yesterday was in error. But he said, as he had before, that the Administration had not given the Senate full information about the two attacks on which any "meaningful" consultation could take place.

Senator Fulbright was joined by several other members of the Foreign Relations Committee in denying that Congress had been told that one of the missions of the destroyers, the Maddox and the Turner Joy, had been "visual and electronic surveillance."

Senator Wayne Morse and Senator Albert Gore insisted in interviews that Defense Secretary Robert S. McNamara had never informed the Foreign Relations Committee that the United States Navy ships were on intelligence missions.

State Department officials insisted, despite Senatorial denials, that Secretary McNamara had briefed at least some members of Congress on the secret intelligence mission of the destroyers.

None of the transcripts of official testimony by the Secretary at the time of the Gulf of Tonkin crisis included information about the mission, either in records made public or, Senatorial sources said, in portions withheld for security reasons.

But the State Department officials indicated the briefing might have taken place during an informal gathering at the White House on Aug. 3, 1964, during which no transcript was kept.

The department said its assertion that some briefing had taken place was based on Mr. McNamara's statement of last week that "the Congress, at the time of the debates on the Tonkin Gulf resolution, was aware that visual and electronic surveillance of the area was one of the purposes" of the destroyers' operations.

President's View

AUSTIN, Tex., Feb. 26 (UPI)—The White House said today that President Johnson was satisfied Congress had been given the full facts when it approved the Gulf of Tonkin resolution.

The White House was also emphatic in its assertion that the President had no doubt in his mind that the attacks on United States destroyers in the gulf were unprovoked.