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LAVELLE INQUIRY WIDENED TO NAVY

Two Ex-Carrier Pilots Called
by Senate Committee
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WASHINGTON, Sept. 27 — The Senate Armed Services Committee, which has been investigating charges of unauthorized bombing of North Vietnam by the Air Force, has widened its inquiry to include allegations of illegal activities by the Navy.

Senator John C. Stennis, the Mississippi Democrat who is chairman of the committee, announced today that the committee would hear testimony tomorrow from two men who were Navy pilots in Southeast Asia from October, 1971, until this July.

Senator Stennis would say only that he had "received direct allegations that violations of the rules of engagement by the Navy" had occurred and that, for that reason, he had called the two men.

'Could Be Serious'

A Congressional source familiar with the allegations said that they "could be as serious, if not more serious, than those made by Lonnie Franks."

Sergeant Lonnie Franks wrote the letter to Senator Harold E. Hughes, Democrat of Iowa, that prompted the investigation into the unauthorized bombing ordered by Lieut. en. John D. Lavelle.

Today, Defense Secretary Melvin R. Laird announced that Sergeant Franks had been promoted to staff sergeant, effective about Nov. 1.

According to the Congressional source, Senator Stennis received a letter last weekend from William Gregg Groepper charging Nav8 violations of the rules of the air war. Mr. Groepper, an Ohio State University graduate from Bozeman, Mont., served as a Navy pilot aboard the aircraft carrier Constellation off North Vietnam. Mr. Groepper resigned from the Navy 10 days ago, his four-year tour of duty having expired.

Lietutenant to Testify

The committee also plans to hear Lieut. Charles William Moore Jr., a Naval Academy graduate, who served aboard the Constellation with Mr. Groepper. He is now assigned to the Navy's infantry school at Cecil Field in Jacksonville, Fla.

There have been previous allegations that the Navy has broken the rules of the air war. Last spring, Senator Clifford P. Case, Republican of New Jersey, received a letter from a naval officer charging that the Navy had been practicing what is known as "trolling."

The officer said this involved sending unarmed reconnaissance planes over North Vietnam for the sole purpose of drawing enemy fire. Bombers could then drop bombs on the targets and call the missions "protective reaction" raids.

According to the rules laid down by the Pentagon before President Nixon broadened the air war in March, pilots could drop bombs only after they were fired upon.

Charges Not Taken Up

The charges received by Senator Case were never the subject of a Congressional investigation and were never, according to the senator, either directly confirmed or denied by the Pentagon.

Congressional sources refused to detail the allegations made by Mr. Groepper, but one said they were graver than those Senator Case had received. This informant characterized "trolling" as "definitely immoral but probably not illegal." Mr. Groepper, he said had charged illegalities.

Efforts to reach Mr. Groepper and Lietenant Moore today were unsuccessful.

The committee met for about two hours this afternoon, but, according to Senator Stennis, its only official action was to request from the Pentagon five cablegrams and messages "relating to the rules of engagement." The documents are classified top secret.

A Congressional source said the committee had also received a long sworn statement from General Lavelle replying to charges made by one of his former aides last week. The aide, Maj. Gen. Alton D. Slay, told the committee that General Lavelle had personally ordered him to stage unauthorized bombings and to falsify reports after the strikes.

The exact contents of General Lavelle's response could not be determined, but one person who had seen them said that the general had reiterated his position that he had neither ordered illegal raids nor ordered official reports altered.