

Ribicoff Charges Perjury at Hearing On Army Gun Sale

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WASHINGTON, Oct. 22—Senator Abraham A. Ribicoff asserted today that perjury had been committed during Senate hearings on retired Maj. Gen. Carl C. Turner's activities while he was Provost Marshal General of the Army.

A transcript of the general's statements was forwarded to the Justice Department for appropriate action.

In announcing this action, Senator Ribicoff, Democrat of Connecticut and acting chairman of the investigating panel, charged that General Turner had been instrumental in arranging "an extensive cover-up operation within the Army of questionable activities of Sgt. Maj. William O. Wooldridge" in Germany, the United States and South Vietnam.

General Turner testified before the committee today and earlier in the investigation that he had accepted 536 hand guns and other automatic weapons from the Chicago and Kansas City, Mo., police departments with their full understanding that the weapons were for his own personal use.

Any such understanding has been denied under oath by officials of both police departments, and it was this conflict in testimony that formed the basis for Senator Ribicoff's accusation.

Some of the weapons were later sold by General Turner for profit, some were traded for other weapons at gun shows and some were added to his

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personal collection, according to evidence developed by the committee investigators.

Senator Ribicoff recalled today that General Turner had acknowledged that he signed a statement or receipt on five separate occasions that the 396 guns he received from the Chicago Police Department "were for the use of the United States Army for training purposes and that they would be destroyed when they were no longer useful."

As the hearing got under way today, three Kansas City police officials told the committee that they would never have released confiscated weapons to General Turner if they had known he intended to sell them for personal profit. Police Chief Clarence Kelley said such disposition of the guns would have been "unethical and improper."

Chief Kelley's retired subordinate, Charles Don Bishop, said of his meeting with General Turner that "he was quite clear that he wanted the weapons for display purposes in connection with his firearms safety lectures to Boy Scouts and other civic groups and that the guns eventually would go to the military police museum at Fort Gordon, Ga."

Summing up the conflicting testimony, Senator Ribicoff said at the conclusion of the session; "Top ranking officials of the Chicago and Kansas City

Police Departments testified under oath before the subcommittee that they would have denied General Turner possession of the firearms if they had known that he had intended to use them for personal purposes or to sell them for personal profit."

"General Turner, on the other hand, has repeatedly testified that officials of both departments knew, because he had so informed them, that the weapons were not for the Army's use but for his own personal use. They denied he had made this statement.

"The conflict in testimony is direct. Perjury was committed in these hearings. As acting chairman of the subcommittee I will direct the staff to forward a transcript of these hearings to the Department of Justice for appropriate action."

Throughout the examination of General Turner, Senator Ribicoff left no doubt of his opinion as to who had told the truth. He accused General Turner of having "a convenient memory" that served him well when it was in his own interest to remember but became faulty when facts and figures "might place you in a bad light."

At the direction of the Connecticut Senator, a copy of the transcript of the hearings was also forwarded to appropriate Army officials "for consideration of the failures in administration and supervision which have so seriously marked these hearings."

at Inquiry Into Army Guns

Senator Ribicoff said the Army's former Chief of Staff, Gen. Harold K. Johnson, would be invited to appear as a witness to rebut General Turner's testimony that he was fully informed about alleged irregularities in service mens' clubs in Germany, the United States and South Vietnam in which Sergeant Major Wooldridge had been implicated.

The committee developed testimony early in its study that Sergeant Major Wooldridge and his friends, including a number of senior sergeants, were linked to an investigation of the thefts of hundreds of thousands of dollars in cash merchandise and equipment from enlisted men's clubs in Germany, and to various irregularities at Fort Benning Ga., and in South Vietnam.

At one point today, General Turner was accused by Senator Lee Metcalf, Democrat of Montana, of "preventing the investigation" of Sergeant Major Wooldridge and his friends and of allowing the case to become "a national scandal."

General Turner acknowledged that he had ordered a report on Sergeant Major Wooldridge's activities at Fort Benning to be "sanitized" and the sergeant major's name removed from the report.

But the former Provost Marshal General denied any wrongdoing, saying he had been motivated by "an aversion to fishing expeditions, witch-hunting and destroying a man's reputation on the basis of capricious and malicious gossip."

"Why do you drag this 'red herring' of witch-hunt across our trail here?" asked Senator Edward J. Gurney, Republican of Florida. He said that far from blackening Sergeant Major Wooldridge's name, Army investigators had been "frustrated for years" by General Turner's refusal to make available reports on past investigations of the sergeant major's alleged irregularities.