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Leak Laid to Wrong Man, Anderson Says

By BERNARD GWERTZMAN

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WASHINGTON, Feb. 15—Columnist Jack Anderson asserted today that the Nixon Administration had erroneously concluded that a rear admiral was the source of secret documents leaked to him about the American role in the recent Indian-Pakistani war.

At a news conference in New York Mr. Anderson said the admiral, Robert O. Welander, had been "banished" from the Pentagon to sea duty because the White House, on the basis of information from the Federal Bureau of Investigation, thought he was the source of the leaks.

"But the information will keep coming because they plugged the wrong leak," Mr. Anderson said. "The F.B.I. got the wrong man. I never have talked to Welander. He gave me nothing. His career is ruined because the F.B.I. made a mistake."

'Hardly a Demotion'

Jerry W. Friedheim, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense in charge of public affairs, declined to discuss Mr. Anderson's remarks. He said "no comment" when asked a series of questions dealing with the substance of Mr. Anderson's assertions.

The Pentagon did confirm that Admiral Welander, who is 47 years old, had been transferred on Feb. 1 from a job in the Office of the Joint Chiefs of Staff to the post of commander of a Cruiser-Destroyer Flotilla 6, based in Charleston, S. C. A Navy Department source said that such a flotilla usually consisted of about a dozen ships and "could hardly be called a demotion" for Admiral

Welander, who achieved his rank last July.

He is to report to his new post on March 1 and the Defense Department said he was on leave, "whereabouts unknown." No one answered the phone at his last listed residence, in Alexandria, Va., outside Washington.

At the afternoon news briefing, Ronald L. Zigler, the White House press secretary, said that Admiral Welander had served as the liaison officer between the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the White House, but he refused to discuss a series of questions pertaining to Mr. Anderson's charges.

President Nixon said at a news conference last week that "we have a lot of circumstantial evidence" on the identity of the source of the leaked documents, but he added that as a lawyer, he did not consider it adequate to take to court.

Minutes for the Pentagon

Mr. Anderson, in a telephone interview this evening, said that Admiral Welander's staff was responsible for preparing for the Pentagon the minutes of the Washington Special Action Group of the National Security Council, which met throughout the Indian-Pakistani crisis.

Some of the documents were published in part by Mr. Anderson and made available by him to other newspapers, but he repeated that Admiral Welander had had nothing to do with leaking them to him.

Asked if he was willing to take a lie-detector test, he said he was.

Mr. Anderson's columns in December and January carried excerpts not only from the Special Action groups meetings but from secret cablegrams

and intelligence estimates during the Indian-Pakistani war. They disclosed strong anti-Indian bias the Administration, which had accused India of starting the war.

Henry A. Kissinger, the President's adviser on national security affairs, who conducted the meetings, was quoted in the minutes as saying that Mr. Nixon wanted a definite "tilt" in American policy toward Pakistan.

The documents also indicated that the State and Defense Departments did not share Mr. Kissinger's conviction that India planned to crush West Pakistan once East Pakistan, now known as Bangladesh, fell.

Publication of the Anderson papers helped stir a political controversy here over the wisdom of the Administration's pro-Pakistan policy—a dispute that persists.

Mr. Anderson, who said he had "several sources" for his secret documents, related that his sources had informed him that Admiral Welander was "purged" as a result of the F.B.I. investigation.