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'Drunk Case' Envoy's China Role Reduced

United Press

Washington

Arthur K. Watson, the United States Ambassador to France, alleged by a columnist to have gotten "gloriously drunk" on a flight to Washington, will not lead the new United States diplomatic contacts with China in Paris as the White House had announced originally.

This fact emerged yesterday from Secretary of State William P. Rogers' defense

of Watson before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Rogers promised to make a full report of the alleged March 9 incident.

The White House indicated in an announcement nearly two weeks ago that Watson, then in Washington for consultations about his new assignment in Paris, would be the chief United States negotiator in talks with Chinese

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Ambassador Huang Chen.

The two diplomats conferred shortly afterward in Paris in the beginning of contacts resulting from President Nixon's visit to China late last month.

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Several days later columnist Jack Anderson wrote that Watson had overindulged in alcohol and had behaved objectionably on the flight home for instructions on the China contacts.

Senator J. William Fulbright (Dem - Ark.), chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, said Rogers told his group that "Watson will not be the negotiator. People much more experienced in China relations will be handling the negotiations. The ambassador was never intended to be the negotiator."

The White House referred all questions about the discrepancy to the State Department, which refused public comment.

Rogers was reported to have defended Watson before the committee in closed session, but not to have denied the drunkenness allegation brought by Anderson.

Rogers was described as saying that "whatever happened was very unfortunate, but was not a pattern of conduct" on Watson's part.

The White House said: "The contact function in Paris will be handled through normal channels, in other words, Ambassador Watson will receive his instructions from the State Department which in turn will coordinate with the White House on matters of White House and immediate presidential interest."

Press Secretary Ronald Ziegler said at the time that he did not know whether Watson will be working with United States experts on China, but he made clear Watson will be the chief negotiator.

Yesterday Fulbright said: "He (Rogers) told us Watson will not be the negotiator. People much more experienced in China relations will be handling the negotiations. The ambassador was never intended to be the negotiator."

Anderson reported that during the March 9 flight that carried Watson to Washington for consultations, the ambassador "kept shouting for more scotch, grabbing the stewardesses and trying to stuff money down the fronts of their blouses, finally passing out, his arms and legs sprawled across the first-class lounge."

Fulbright said Rogers contended the charges were "greatly overblown and exaggerated."