

Text of Statement by Nixon Aide

6-24-71

NYT

Following is the text of the statement made by Mr. Ziegler on the release of the Pentagon study to Congress:

The President met Senator Mansfield this morning from 8 to 9 for breakfast. At the meeting, the President volunteered to make available to the House and Senate the 47 volumes of the Kennedy-Johnson Administration report on Vietnam as well as copies of the 1965 study of the Tonkin incident.

The documents, which are top secret, have not previously been made available to either house. As I announced yesterday, the President has directed the declassification review of these documents pursuant to his Jan. 15, 1971, order instituting a review of the classification of such documents.

President Nixon told Senator Mansfield that the unauthorized publication of portions of the documents created a situation in which Congress would necessarily be making judgments in the meantime on the basis of incomplete data which could give a distorted impression of the report's contents.

For that reason the President feels it is only fair to Congress and to persons mentioned in the documents that the full report be made available. Since the documents relate to the Johnson and Kennedy periods, President Nixon pointed out that he is not in a position to vouch for their accuracy or completeness.

Still 'Top Secret'

Despite the publication of some portions of the documents, they will retain their top-secret classification pend-

ing a complete review of the declassification review and will be made available to the Congress on the understanding they will be subject to existing Congressional rules and regulations covering the handling of the classified material.

President Nixon reiterated to Senator Mansfield that his primary continuing concern has been to protect the secrecy of Government documents in cases where disclosure could harm the national security or impair negotiations with other nations. President Nixon also emphasized that the decision to offer the documents to the Congress does not represent any change of policy but merely reflects the special circumstances created by the recent unauthorized disclosures. The documents will be delivered to the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House for such disposition as the joint leadership of each body shall determine.

I should add that following the breakfast meeting with Senator Mansfield this morning, members of the President's staff talked to Speaker Albert, who is aware of this step being taken by the President, and also the President met this morning with Secretary Laird to tell him that the joint leadership would be contacting him on this to work out the arrangements for the forwarding to the Congress of the 47 volumes of classified material which I referred to in my earlier remarks.