

Kennedy's Doubts on Policy Told

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Washington

Senator Wayne Morse (Dem-Ore.) said yesterday that President Kennedy was conducting an intense re-examination of United States policy in Vietnam when he was assassinated, and "I happen to believe the policies would have been different had the President lived . . . to complete his review."

Morse spoke as the Senate Foreign Relations Committee heard former diplomat John Galbraith criticize the U.S. position in Southeast Asia and call for a strategy based on limited defensive action.

Galbraith, Harvard University economist and former U.S. Ambassador to India, said American withdrawal from South Vietnam is not possible now because there is no way to unravel history.

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Morse said that Mr. Kennedy told him ten days before he was felled by an assassin's bullet in Dallas on Nov. 21, 1963, that he was reexamining Vietnam policy.

And, Morse added, Mr. Kennedy told him he wasn't sure the senator's criticism of U.S. policy was not well grounded.

Morse said he went to the White House shortly before Mr. Kennedy was killed to discuss congressional strategy on an education bill.

He said Mr. Kennedy re-

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ferred to Morse's critical Senate speeches about the American role in South Vietnam.

"He said he wasn't sure but what I was right," Morse said. "He said he was making an intense study and re-examination of those policies . . ."

Morse acknowledged that the Kennedy course in South Vietnam can only be conjecture now. But he added:

"I happen to think that the policies would have been different had the President lived long enough to complete his review. I don't think we'd be sacrificing the lives of increasing numbers of American boys . . ."

The State Department declined comment on Morse's report. Officials recalled privately that at the time of which Morse spoke the South Vietnamese government of Ngo Dinh Diem had just been overthrown.

Privately, officials said they could not recall any special review of the U.S. position in Vietnam at that time, but did not dispute Morse's report that Mr. Kennedy had told him that he had such a review in mind.

Galbraith told the committee that President Johnson inherited a difficult situation in Vietnam, and he suggested a defensive strategy designed to hold limited areas until "the day when some kind of bargain can be struck in South Vietnam between the Communists and the non-Communists."

Galbraith said he framed a Vietnam report nearly five

years ago advising Mr. Kennedy against overt U.S. steps either to topple or brace the regime of then Premier Ngo Dinh Diem. In retrospect, the former diplomat said, he wishes the report had advocated U.S. withdrawal.

Galbraith told the Senate committee he believes that if South Vietnam's peasants had an election choice between the Viet Cong and the Saigon government, "they would enthusiastically vote to have neither of them."

"They only want to be left alone."

Galbraith came to Capital Hill primarily to discuss Mr. Johnson's foreign aid program. But the talk soon turned to South Vietnam.

"May I suggest that there are better ways of being unhappy about our policy in Vietnam than by cutting the aid program," Galbraith said.

The aid bill would provide \$3.4 billion for the year ahead, and while Galbraith warmly endorsed the economic assistance involved, he questioned the value of the \$900 million military aid program.

Chairman J. William Fulbright (Dem-Ark.) of the committee has argued that American involvement in Vietnam had its beginnings with an economic aid program.

Galbraith questioned that, and opposed Fulbright's call for a program of aid loans through the United Nations and other international agencies, to insulate America against assistance-based overseas commitments.