

Retirement Of the C-5A Critic's Foe

Washington

Brigadier General Joseph J. Capucci, 61, retired on a \$22,422.36 annual pension last week after a 34-year career in the military—most of it spent in intelligence work.

Although the Air Force general retired with honor, there was an unpublicized episode in his career that was less than distinguished—in fact the U.S. Civil Service Commission appeals office called it “unconscionable.”

The episode involved Capucci's destruction of evidence that would have cleared A. Ernest Fitzgerald, a cost analyst for the Pentagon, of charges of wrong-doing.

The action occurred while Capucci was conducting an official Pentagon investigation of Fitzgerald, who had embarrassed the Air Force in 1968 by disclosing huge excess costs due to mismanagement of the C-5A aircraft contract.

Capucci, the director of the Air Force Office of Special Investigations, assembled a derogatory file on Fitzgerald, whose \$33,786-a-year job was abolished after his C-5A testimony in Congress. Capucci later turned this file over to Congress, where Fitzgerald was trying to rally support.

Fitzgerald subsequently appealed for reinstatement to the Civil Service Commission. The commission's appeals office ordered the Defense Department to rehire Fitzgerald a year ago.

In its report the commission criticized the fact that evidence proving Fitzgerald's innocence had been destroyed and Capucci's office had turned over to Congress only a file containing false allegations implying Fitzgerald had a financial interest in a firm doing business with the Air Force.

The appeals office stated in its report: “We find it unconscionable for OSI to have shown only the derogatory allegations without also showing the results of the investigation which laid to rest these allegations. We can only view this as an attempt to justify Mr. Fitzgerald's separation” (from the Pentagon).

Fitzgerald called the information turned over to Congress a “dirt file” and said it was used by the administration to try to discredit his testimony. Fitzgerald's projections of \$2 billion in excess cost of the C-5A project have since proved to be accurate.

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