

SENATE, BY 84 TO 2, CONFIRMS ABRAMS

OCT 13 1972

But Hughes and Proxmire

Voice Dissatisfaction

NYTimes

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Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Oct. 12—The Senate voted 84 to 2 today to confirm the nomination of Gen. Creighton W. Abrams as Army Chief of Staff.

At a news conference before the confirmation vote, Senator Harold E. Hughes, Democrat of Iowa, and William Proxmire, Democrat of Wisconsin, threatened to delay future promotions of senior military officers unless the Pentagon took immediate steps to improve its command and control procedures.

"This issue is not going to disappear, and it is not going to go away and it is not going to be swept under the rug," Senator Hughes said.

"Due notice has now been served on the Pentagon," Mr. Hughes added, "that unless there is some action, there will be pressure from the Congress for more hearings" into the unauthorized bombings.

Senator Hughes called on the Air Force and on the Navy, which also was accused this week of unauthorized bombing, to convene a court of inquiry into the Indochina air war "with the authority to recommend a court martial, if the evidence warrants it."

He said the Armed Services Committee had been forced to curtail its hearings into Maj. Gen. John D. Lavelle's unauthorized bombings because of pressure to conclude the legislative session in time for the election campaign.

Top military leaders, he said, "have the opportunity between now and January to clean their own house. If they do not begin action, then the Congress will."

2 Sentiments Are Quoted

In response to questions, the Senator further declared that he would have delayed the vote on confirmation of Adm. Thomas H. Moorer to be Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff if he had known at the time of that vote in June that the admiral had discussed at least one of the unauthorized bombing raids with General Lavelle.

Admiral Moorer testified in June, after being nominated for a second four-year term, that "I wouldn't have occasion to communicate directly with General Lavelle" about bombing restrictions.

He was questioned again about the comment during a second appearance before the Armed Services Committee two weeks ago.

"He gave me the sort of answer I couldn't believe," Mr. Hughes told reporters today. "He said it wasn't important."

"Well," the Senator added, "how could he not consider it important? Had I known at the time that there had been communication between Lavelle and Moorer, I certainly would have retained a hold on Admiral Moorer's reconfirmation."

The Senator, whose receipt of a letter from an Air Force sergeant began the bombing inquiry, also released another letter, from an Air Force officer in Saigon alleging further improprieties and cover-ups in the Seventh Air Force at the time it was under the command of General Lavelle.

Describes Falsification

The letter described the destruction and falsification of documents last March after the bombing of a village in Cambodia that was allegedly ordered by Maj. Gen. Alton D. Slay, who was General Lavelle's director of operations. A similar letter with the same allegations had previously been made public by Senator Proxmire.

Mr. Proxmire concluded nearly six hours of debate on the Abrams nomination last night by noting that if the Pentagon did not immediately begin a thorough review of the air war, "they are going to have a lot of trouble in this body."

"It takes only one Senator to raise these issues," Senator Proxmire said. "We might delay for a long period of time—we might even kill—some of the other nominations unless we get assurance from the Pentagon that they are going to do everything they can to prevent future direct violations of orders."

Mrs. Smith Shifts Stand

Senator John C. Stennis, the Committee Chairman, has publicly stated that he wanted any future investigations into the unauthorized bombings to be made by the Pentagon. But Senator Hughes today quoted Mr. Stennis as saying that "the case is not closed."

There was no debate before the vote today on the nomination of General Abrams, who was opposed only by Senators Proxmire and Frank Church, Democrat of Idaho.

Senator Margaret Chase Smith, ranking Republican on the Armed Services Committee, released a statement yesterday accusing General Abrams of "nonfeasance" in his role as Vietnam commander. Apparently she changed her mind overnight, for she voted to confirm.

There was never and doubt throughout the Senate committee's four-month inquiry that General Abrams would be confirmed. The general, 58 years old, had served as Vietnam commander for the last five years. He was repeatedly praised by most members of the usually pro-military Armed Services Committee.