

GENERAL RECALLS EX-COST ANALYST

MAR 1 1973

Says Disclosure of Overrun
Plagued the Air Force
NYTimes

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Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Feb. 28 —

Gen. John D. Ryan, the Air Force Chief of Staff, testified today that "we had a hell of a problem on our hands" after a former cost analyst, A. Ernest Fitzgerald, disclosed a \$2-billion cost overrun on the Lockheed Aircraft Corporation's C-5A transport plane contract.

But General Ryan said he paid little attention to what became of Mr. Fitzgerald after that. With some prompting, he recalled some "general expressions that he [Mr. Fitzgerald] was not a team player" and conceded that the incident put the Air Force in a bad light.

General Ryan said he was unable to recall specific conversations and only learned from newspaper articles that Mr. Fitzgerald was the subject of a major Air Force investigation, of his being taken off C-5A work or of his eventual ouster in a reduction in force.

General Ryan was vice chief of staff in 1968, when the Lockheed affair was made public by Mr. Fitzgerald. The general testified today before Herman D. Staiman, chief of the Appeals Examining Office of the Civil Service Commission. Mr. Fitzgerald is trying to regain his old job with the Air Force.

'Computer Error'

The Air Force contends that a "computer error" mistakenly notified Mr. Fitzgerald of his status as a career civil servant. The "mistake" came to light after Mr. Fitzgerald testified before Congress on the C-5A.

Mr. Fitzgerald contends he was punished by dismissal for disclosing the cost overrun.

John Bodner Jr., Mr. Fitzgerald's attorney, questioned General Ryan for almost four hours.

General Ryan said he knew of no one who was ever demoted or dismissed because of the cost overrun problem, although it was the largest he could remember in 35 years in the Air Force. He blamed procurement methods, not individuals.

Mr. Bodner spoke of the late Representative L. Rivers, Democrat of South Carolina, as having commented on the matter, saying Mr. Fitzgerald would lose his job immediately if he had any say in the matter.

"What did you think about Mr. Fitzgerald's future after that?" Mr. Bodner asked the general.

"I didn't give it much thought," General Ryan replied.

He said he knew little about civilian employes of the Secretary of the Air Force because his responsibility was "with the blue services," meaning uniformed Air Force personnel.