

Corruption

Denied by

Laos Envoy

AP
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Former U.S. Ambassador to Laos G. McMurtrie Godley has denied there was any widespread corruption while he ran a mission in Laos from 1970 to 1973.

Godley acknowledged that he had not asked for authority from the State Department before ordering construction of a swimming pool on the grounds of his official residence, which was being rented from a Laotian landlord at the time.

Godley testified before a House government operations subcommittee Wednesday in connection with the disappearance of over \$1.5 million in U.S. military supplies requisitioned by the embassy in Laos from war stocks in Thailand and South Vietnam.

The subcommittee produced documents taken from embassy files showing that embassy personnel were told to refer to the swimming pool as a "water storage tank" to disguise it in government records.

Godley said in a prepared statement: "I categorically deny that I engaged in...any illegal activity. I would welcome an investigation of my personal financial records, including income tax returns."

Godley's testimony left it unclear whether Howard E. Mushett, one-time embassy security chief, had ever told him formally about corruption in the property disposal sales. In his statement Godley said Mushett "declined...to put specific charges in writing."

He did not explain a memorandum taken from embassy files that showed Mushett wrote to him on Sept. 4, 1972, charging that senior officials were directing the procurement of millions of dollars of U.S. government property and permitting it to be sold, bartered, and traded away.

Godley also said he had no idea until about 10 days ago that no records whatever were kept on \$1.9 million of surplus requisition from Thailand and \$250,000 worth from Saigon. Only 22 per cent could be traced by investigators, he acknowledged.