

Air Force Assigns C-5 Critic Fitzgerald To New Office Job

Associated Press

A. Ernest Fitzgerald, fired nearly three years ago after disclosing a \$2 billion cost overrun on the C-5 jet transport plane, has been assigned a new job with the Air Force, the Pentagon said yesterday.

Fitzgerald, after waging a constant fight for reinstatement, will return to the Pentagon only after the Civil Service Commission ordered him reinstated with back pay.

On Sept. 18, the commission ruled that the Air Force acted improperly when it dismissed the controversial cost analyst. The commission said the firing was for personal reasons and not for Fitzgerald's repeated criticism of the expensive Air Force C-5 project.

Coincidentally, defense officials say the C-5 proved itself during the U.S. airlift to Israel in recent weeks.

Reached shortly after the Pentagon announcement, Fitzgerald said the Air Force has made no specific job offer to him, although he has an appointment scheduled at the Pentagon Monday.

"I'll keep an open mind," he said. "I'm not going to prejudge it."

Fitzgerald said he was surprised that the Air Force announced his new assignment before asking if he'd accept it.

He will be paid \$36,000 annually in a position described roughly the same as the one he held when he was fired Jan. 5, 1970.

When he left the Air Force then, Fitzgerald was paid \$31,874. He has not been promoted and holds the same federal pay rate in his new position of deputy for productivity management under the assistant secretary for financial management.

The difference in pay is the result of normal increases granted government workers since 1970.

In announcing Fitzgerald's new job, Pentagon spokesman Jerry W. Friedheim said, "We start with a clean slate."

In an interview on Thursday before he accepted the new position, Fitzgerald said he would take no job which carried less authority than his earlier position.

Asked whether it appears the Pentagon is more interested in saving money now than before, Fitzgerald said, "I don't see any change."

While he is returning to work, Fitzgerald is asking the Civil Service Commission to force the government to pay an estimated \$200,000 in legal fees. Back pay of more than \$100,000 must also be decided.



A. ERNEST FITZGERALD
... fired in 1970