

U.S. Envoy Urged Withholding of Data Sought by Kennedy

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By JOHN W. FINNEY

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WASHINGTON, April 2 — Graham A. Martin, the United States Ambassador to South Vietnam, suggested in a confidential cablegram to the State Department last month that Senator Edward M. Kennedy not be given an "honest and detailed answer" to questions he had raised about American policy in Indochina.

The cablegram, dated March 21 and addressed to Secretary of State Kissinger, was made public today by Senator Kennedy, who expressed "outrage" that an American ambassador should suggest that members of Congress not be given honest answers to questions of public policy.

In a statement on the Senate

Continued on Page 4, Column 4

Continued From Page 1, Col. 8

floor, Senator Kennedy accused Mr. Martin of "cover-up and deception" and said the cablegram raised "serious questions about the qualifications and representation of the American Ambassador to Saigon."

A copy of the Martin cablegram, marked "confidential," was received earlier this week at Senator Kennedy's office in an unmarked envelope post-marked in Washington. The top of the cablegram showing its distribution within the State Department had been cut off, apparently so that the person who sent the copy could not be traced.

A State Department spokesman said there was "no reason to doubt" that Senator Kennedy had obtained an "authentic copy" of the Martin cablegram. The State Department was described as in "somewhat of a dither" over how the message reached Senator Kennedy, but one official observed, "Somebody is obviously out to knife Graham Martin."

After several hours of staff consultations, the State Department issued a statement confirming that Senator Kennedy had a copy of the cablegram and deploring the "unauthorized disclosure" of such a communication. The statement said it was within "Ambassador Martin's prerogatives" to make recommendations on how to reply to Senator Kennedy but noted that Mr. Kissinger had "decided otherwise" and provided "a substantive reply" to the Senator.

The Martin cablegram was prompted by a letter coded

March 13 that Senator Kennedy, as chairman of the Senate Judiciary subcommittee on refugees, sent to Mr. Kissinger raising several questions about American policy in Indochina.

In his cablegram Mr. Martin said: "It would be the height of folly to permit Kennedy the tactical advantage of an honest and detailed answer to the questions of substance raised in his letter."

Routine Reply Suggested

The Ambassador suggested that the Senator be given "a very short routine reply" from the Assistant Secretary of State for Congressional Relations stating that his letter had been "noted" and that answers to his questions would be given in future testimony by officials of the Executive Branch before "appropriate congressional committees."

Mr. Martin also linked the Kennedy letter to a group "whose objective," he said, "is to aid Hanoi by seriously ripping the R.V.N. [Republic of Vietnam] through a drastic reduction of economic and military aid." He suggested that Senator Kennedy's staff "will spearhead this effort."

Senator Kennedy is a principal co-sponsor of an amendment to block Administration efforts to raise the ceiling on military aid to South Vietnam from \$1.13-billion to \$1.6-billion.

Mr. Martin previously suggested a link between Hanoi and Congressional efforts to hold down military aid to South Vietnam in a long cablegram March 6 taking issue with an article in The New York Times of Feb. 16. The article, by David K. Shipler, described the American military aid program. At the Ambassador's suggestion, Mr. Martin's March 6 cablegram was made public by the State Department.

In his earlier cablegram, Mr. Martin suggested that Hanoi and the Provisional Revolutionary Government in South Vietnam were using "the American peace movement" to influence "susceptible Congressional staffers" to reduce aid to South Vietnam.

Senator Kennedy's letter to Mr. Kissinger was prompted in part by the Martin cablegram of March 6. The Senator expressed "dismay," saying that Mr. Martin was indulging in "the worst kind of innuendo" in suggesting a tie between decisions in Hanoi and Congressional views about American policy in Indochina.

Mr. Kissinger did not take the Ambassador's advice on how to replay to Senator Kennedy. Rather, the Secretary wrote a 13-page letter, made public on Sunday, responding at length to each of the Senator's questions and arguing that the United States had, in effect, assumed a commitment to provide continuing military

Within the Foreign Service, Mr. Martin has been a somewhat controversial figure, particularly among some junior officers who resent what they

regard as his imperious, sometimes arrogant ways. In Saigon, he has been a strong supporter of the Government of President Nguyen Van Thieu.

Senator Kennedy, in his statement, placed the text of the Martin cablegram into the Congressional Record so it could be read by all members of Congress. Mr. Kennedy said: "The cable raises the most profound questions about which country and whose interests Ambassador Martin is truly representing."

TEXT OF CABLEGRAM

By United Press International

WASHINGTON, April 2— Following is the text of the cablegram from Ambassador Martin in Saigon to Secretary Kissinger, made public today by Senator M. Kennedy:

1. It seems rather clear that the Shipler article and the reaction to Embassy Saigon's comment thereon had the effect of upsetting the timetable of those whose objective is to aid Hanoi by seriously crippling the R.V.N. through a drastic reduction of economic and military aid. The general effort was to be mounted later against the authorizing and appropriation process for [Fiscal year] 75.

2. I think it would be the and economic aid to South Vietnam.

height of folly to permit Kennedy, whose staff will spearhead this effort, the tactical advantage of an honest and detailed answer to questions of substance raised in his letter. While, as an individual Senator he has the right to raise them, they are not questions which either fall within the purview of his subcommittee or which should be answered to him as an individual Senator so close before the full Administration position is presented to the Foreign Affairs and the Foreign Relations Committees. The list of questions is cleverly drawn to thoroughly mix up apples and oranges. Any substantive answer would permit another calculated campaign of distortion that would pre-empt the attention the presentation of the Administration's case should receive.

3. Therefore, I would suggest a very short routine reply from the Assistant Secretary for Congressional Relations stating that the department had noted his letter and was sure that its substance would be thoroughly covered in the testimony to be given in the near future by the Executive Branch witnesses before the appropriate Congressional committees which

would consider foreign assistance legislation for FY 74.

4. I personally believe that interests of U. S. policy would be best served by stopping there. However, if it is thought essential to take cognizance of the next-to-last paragraph of the letter another short paragraph might be added. It should state that since a considerable number of members of the Congress had asked the Comptroller General of the United States to investigate precisely, the same matters to which Ambassador Martin had called attention, the department would prefer to defer comment until the Controller General's investigation had been completed.

MARTIN