

Jackson: Hill, Saigon Misled

By Murrey Marder

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Sen. Henry M. Jackson (D-Wash.) charged yesterday that new disclosures show that the executive branch "misled a foreign government and the Congress" about U.S. commitments to South Vietnam in 1972-73.

Jackson, a Democratic presidential contender, intensified his call for a full inquiry by the Senate Armed Services Committee in the wake of partial disclosure of correspondence between former President Nixon and former South Vietnamese President Nguyen Van Thieu. Several members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee also are considering an inquiry.

Texts of two Nixon letters to Thieu, and portions of two others, were made public Wednesday by Nguyen Tien Hung, a former minister in Thieu's cabinet.

The Ford administration said the letters appeared to be authentic, but it continued to refuse to make the correspondence public officially, partly on grounds that what was said privately matched what the Nixon administration said publicly.

Jackson strongly challenged that rationale.

In the letters released by Hung, Nixon promised Thieu that the United States would "respond with full force" and would "take swift and severe retaliatory action" if North Vietnam violated the 1973 Paris cease-fire agreement, which took U.S. troops out of the war.

White House press secretary Ron Nessen reiterated that this does not differ "in



ELMO R. ZUMWALT
... blames Nixon, Kissinger

substance" from what was said in public at the time by the Nixon administration.

"There is a fateful difference," Jackson countered in a statement yesterday, "between the administration's publicly expressing a desire to retain certain options in the event of North Vietnamese violations of the Paris accords and the President's secretly committing the United States to exercise one or more of these options."

"By failing to disclose the precise nature and texts of secret understandings reached with South Vietnam, the administration misled a foreign government and the Congress as to the nature and extent of the U.S. commitment to that government," Jackson said.

"The (Ford) administration has been accusing Congress of violating commitments and obligations to

South Vietnam the Congress never heard of, let alone endorsed," said Jackson.

He noted that Graham A. Martin, the U.S. ambassador to Saigon, in his "parting shot, on leaving Vietnam," charged that "America did not live up to those commitments." Thieu angrily made the same charge when he resigned last month.

"What commitments?" demanded Jackson. "This is what we are trying to find out."

Jackson said it is "a grotesque and dangerous situation" for the U.S. Congress and people to "have to rely on foreign officials" for information about "vital communications," which "can be sprung at will—like rabbits out of a hat—by a foreign government."

The dispute over the Nixon-Thieu exchanges was joined yesterday by retired Adm. Elmo R. Zumwalt Jr., former chief of naval operations and member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff from 1970 to 1974, who is considering running for political office.

Zumwalt was quoted as saying: "Kissinger and Nixon did not level with the Congress as to the commitments that were made..."

Zumwalt, in interviews with the Charlottesville, Va., Daily Progress and with United Press International, said that President Nixon and Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger disclosed the "commitment" to Thieu at a meeting with the Joint Chiefs.

Zumwalt said the private agreement with Thieu was that the United States "would respond vigorously

in the event of major truce violations and that we would replace equipment" used up by the South Vietnamese army.

"Respond vigorously" is a term that approximates the language used publicly; it is considerably more ambiguous than the "respond with full force" language in the Nixon letters to Thieu.

The pledge "demanded by Thieu," Zumwalt said, "was his price for going along with a very unfavorable truce... a bad truce for the South Vietnamese because it left the enemy intact in their country, in the South."

Zumwalt said, "The Nixon-Kissinger administration must bear a large share of the blame for the fact that Congress failed to honor those commitments that had been made in the name of the country."

"The view that I had," said Zumwalt, "was that apparently congressional leaders weren't informed in any formal way that these agreements were made. And if that was the case, in my view, the error clearly lies with the administration, for both making (the agreement) and not communicating it" to Congress.