

Laos CIA Forces Perplex Senators

WASHINGTON — (AP) — The Senate today released a censored version of its June 7 secret session on Laos, showing its members baffled on how to restrict funds spent in that Southeast Asian country by the Central Intelligence Agency.

The transcript, printed in the Congressional Record, indicated disagreement among the few senators who know

the secret CIA budget figures as to how much the intelligence agency is spending in Laos.

At one point, Sen. Jack Miller (R-Iowa), subtracting the difference between money appropriated for economic and military aid to Laos and the amount actually spent concluded that about \$120 million more came from somewhere else

for the operations in Laos.

"I think there is only one other place that could have come from, and that is from the CIA. Would that," he asked Sen. Stuart Symington (D-Mo.), "be a proper deduction?"

"I think the senator's analysis could be constructive," Symington replied.

A report issued Monday by two staff members, which formed the basis for the June 7 secret session, indicated that CIA spending in Laos last year was somewhere between \$100 million and \$135 million.

But Sen. John Stennis (D-Miss.), chairman of the Armed Services Committee said "We do not have enough facts here to say whether there is any CIA money that was used in this matter."

Fulbright Against

Sen. J. W. Fulbright (D-Ark.) attacked the use of CIA funds to finance some 4800 Thai troops sent to Laos to bolster government forces, despite a congressional proviso enacted last year against use of outside troops in behalf of that government.

"We spent a lot of time on it and came up with a nullity and a farce," Fulbright said.

Sen. Robert Griffin (R-Mich.), assistant Republican leader, defended the State Department position that the Thais were really volunteers and could be considered as local forces.

Fulbright promptly disagreed, noting that the Thais are recruited in Thailand and all costs are paid by the CIA. "I do not see how anyone can call them volunteers in the true sense of the word," he said.

Other Mercenaries

Publication of the transcript comes two days after release of a Foreign Relations Committee staff report that was the basis of the June 7 session.

The report disclosed that \$70 million in CIA funds was spent last year to support a 30,000-man force of Laotian irregulars, considered a more effective fighting force than the Royal Lao Army, and that most of about \$66 million went to the CIA to support Thai troops in Laos.

In all, Secretary of State William Rogers said recently, \$350 million was spent in Laos in the fiscal year that ended June 30, exclusive of bombing costs that run several times that figure.

In the new fiscal year, military assistance alone is scheduled to run \$90 million more than last year.