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White House Hits Rebuff To Diplomat

Washington

The White House said yesterday that the Senate Foreign Relations Committee's rejection of President Nixon's nominee as assistant secretary of state for East Asian affairs was deplorable and that the consequences "go far beyond the injustice done an outstanding Foreign Service officer."

Wednesday, by a 9 to 7 vote, the committee killed the nomination of G. McMurtrie Godley, former ambassador to Laos, on the ground that he was too closely identified with the administration's Indochina policies. It recommended to Secretary of State William P. Rogers that Godley be nominated for a post not connected with Southeast Asia.

The Nixon administration interpreted the action as a further sign of the committee's long-standing opposition to its policies in Indochina.

Yesterday both the White House and the State Department issued statements saying the committee's decision raises new questions about whether career Foreign Service officers should be held carrying out the policies of the presidents they serve.

Gerald L. Warren, deputy White House press secretary, said that President Nixon believes "it is not in the interest of the Foreign Service or the United States that career officers become subject to retribution for diligent execution of their instructions."

Rogers said that the votes against Godley's nomination "reflect disagreement with policies which Ambassador Godley was directed to carry out rather than with Ambassador Godley's personal qualifications for the position of assistant secretary of state.

"Ambassador Godley has been a career diplomat under six presidents. He has served all of them with loyalty, energy, imagination and courage.

"Those are the best qualities that a diplomat can place at the service of his country. They are the qualities the Senate has indicated it expects of our senior diplomats. The Senate Foreign