

r lbylu vu v

McGovern Bjt NL 470 Two Takes Total 890

By CARL LEUBSDORF

Associated Press Writer

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. AP - Sen. George McGovern, commenting Saturday on his first full week of cross-country campaigning for the White House, defended his credibility and said he regretted that what he considers his strongest asset is being questioned by some members of the news media.

The credibility question, raised by the Democratic nominee in response to a question about news coverage of his campaign, consumed a major portion of his first full news conference since he launched his formal White House drive last Monday.

He also charged that persons involved in an effort to invade his campaign headquarters last May "were directly connected" with President Nixon's campaign organization. He declined to say whether any of them also were involved in the later effort to bug and break into the Democratic party's Watergate headquarters.

On other questions, McGovern said:

-It "has been an up and down week, but generally good," adding that the difficulties within his campaign organization are "very minor by comparison" with the resignation of top Nixon operatives, including former campaign manager John Mitchell.

-That he understands "the anguish and the anger" behind Israel's retaliation raids in Lebanon and Syria, but declined to give "any approval" of what took place;

-That he retracts a statement about the shooting death of a Mexican-American La Raza Unida delegate at Orogrande, N.M., last week by a service station attendant, in which McGovern called it an act of insanity. McGovern said he had a note from an attorney for the attendant suggesting McGovern was prejudging without access to the facts. "That lawyer is right," McGovern said.

McGovern gave a detailed account of the incidents surrounding Pierre Salinger's mission to the Paris peace talks on Vietnam, saying that rather than a credibility problem, he was perhaps too open in discussing the matter.

McGovern said his original statement-in which he denied instructing the former White House press secretary to tell the North Vietnamese they would be better advised to reach an agreement with the Nixon administration before the election-was solely directed at a press report disclosing the mission and stating that was its purpose.

McGovern said he never denied knowing Salinger was in Paris and also told reporters he had asked Salinger that if the occasion arose, "to make some inquiry about our prisoners."

At the time of the Aug. 16 incident in Springfield, Ill., McGovern was quoted as saying Salinger had "no instructions whatsoever from me," when the issue was first raised. Later that day McGovern issued a statement, after talking to Salinger, saying he had asked Salinger to see if the North Vietnamese position on releasing prisoners before the war ends had changed, and found that it hadn't.

MORE

1627pED 09-09

SEP 9 1972

r lbylu vwyyf

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. Take 2 McGovern Bjt: hadn't.

McGovern said he was willing to admit, "the incident was handled in a clumsy way," and that since then, he has been more cautious in commenting, "because I want to be more sure of the facts of a situation before I speak, based on the lesson that I learned from the Salinger thing."

In defending his credibility, McGovern declared, "I haven't told any lies to the press or the American people. I haven't tried to be deceptive. I haven't tried to mislead anyone on any question."

Saturday's news conference was in the Albuquerque hotel where McGovern came for a day of rest after appearing in 10 states the past five days. Earlier he was host at a breakfast for traveling reporters, during which he moved among their tables, chatting informally.

During the conference, he indicated his annoyance at the credibility question, hitting the lecturn with his hands several times for emphasis, including the point where he called "very unfair," the way one unidentified television network had reported his statements on the Salinger matter.

"I personally feel sad about the fact that my credibility, which I regard as my strongest asset, has been questioned by some members of the press."

He said he believes the doubt rises from incidents such as the Salinger matter in which, "I controlled the situation the best I could in the public interest and in the interest of truth."

"On the great questions before this country—the questions of the war, the questions of reducing military spending, the questions of fundamental reform of the tax structure—on those issues, which I regard as crucial, I think my credibility ought to get an A-plus."

In discussing the effort to invade his Washington headquarters, disclosed earlier this week by campaign chairman Lawrence F. O'Brien, McGovern said a carload of persons drove up outside the Capitol Hill building at 3 a.m. but decided, after finding the senator's workers on the premises, to leave without attempting anything.

He said he knew who the persons were, but wanted to leave details to his lawyers at this point, adding, "There is no question in my mind that they were directly connected with the Committee to Re-elect the President."

In discussing the strains in his campaign headquarters, McGovern said, "I really think our problems at the national headquarters are very minor compared with those that have afflicted the Republicans."

1634pED 09-09