

Adm. Welander Denies Telling Yeoman to Spy

By Michael Getler

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Rear Adm. Robert O. Welander denied yesterday that he had ever "ordered or directed" a Navy yeoman to "obtain or save" top-secret White House documents in an unauthorized fashion for delivery to the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

The admiral said the 1971 uproar over "political spying" led then-White House aide John D. Ehrlichman to prepare a confession of "the wildest possible, totally false charges" for him to sign. He refused.

Welander's testimony to the Senate Armed Services Committee was in direct contradiction to a statement Wednesday by Navy Yeoman 1C Charles E. Radford. Radford contended that his wide-ranging data-gathering activities in 1970 and 1971 as a White House-based stenographer-typist for the joint chiefs' liaison office was carried out at the request of his bosses, Welander and, before him, Adm. Rembrandt C. Robinson.

All testimony before the committee is being given under oath.

Committee member Harold Hughes (D-Iowa) was asked by newsmen yesterday if he thought perjury had now been introduced into the probe of alleged military spying on the White House operations of Henry A. Kissinger and his former deputy, then-Gen. Alexander M. Haig Jr. Kissinger then was national security affairs adviser to the President.

"There seems to be a direct conflict, and one or the other would have to be committing perjury under those circumstances," Hughes replied.

Radford told newsmen yesterday he was standing by his original statements.

Between June and December, 1971, Welander was assigned as the liaison man between the chairman of the joint chiefs, Adm. Thomas H. Moorer, and the White House National Security Council

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Associated Press

Welander and aide walk to Senate Armed Services Committee room for closed hearing.

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staff office run by Kissinger. Welander's job was to keep the White House and the Pentagon informed about what each was doing on national security matters.

The issue before the committee now is whether Welander, acting on his own or under instructions from higher up, used Radford as a means to go beyond the authorized liaison duties to acquire a lot of additional information meant only for the President or Kissinger. Or, was Radford—as Moorer, Kissinger and now Welander have suggested—merely acting on his own to impress his superiors?

Welander yesterday attacked "reckless allegations" that his work was part "of an organized plot by the military of this country against its foreign policy and national security interests—some type of military takeover." Moorer has launched a similar defense.

In fact, however, the questions being raised have to do primarily with whether the joint chiefs were indulging in unorthodox methods to find out what was going on in a highly secretive administration, not that they were trying to overturn policy.

Similarly, Radford was under intensive investigation in December, 1971, on another aspect of the case—the leak of classified documents on the U.S. position in the India-Pakistan war to columnist Jack Anderson.

Welander strongly suggested yesterday that Radford's implication of him in the White House documents case had to do with his having fingered Radford as the prospective source of the leaks to Anderson.

One senator yesterday said privately he thought the "smoke screen" clouding everyone's motives would make it very hard for the committee to reach any conclusions until much more testimony is gathered.

A formal statement by Welander was publicly released yesterday, though the actual questioning by the committee was done behind closed doors.

The admiral's prepared statement also heightened interest in the precise role played by Ehrlichman, and several senators expressed interest in calling him to testify.

Ehrlichman formerly was the overall head of the secret White House investigative group known as the "plumbers." It was that group that uncovered allegations of military snooping on Kissinger's office while investigating the leaks to columnist Anderson.

Welander said Ehrlichman initially contacted him to discuss the Anderson leak and "after a few preliminary questions . . . presented me a prepared statement on White House stationery for my signature. This statement would have had me admit to the wildest possible, totally false charges of political spying."

The admiral said he reacted strongly and Ehrlichman eventually backed off. Welander claimed that Ehrlichman's questions were all based on statements Radford made while the yeoman was "the primary suspect in an offense," the Anderson leaks, which Welander said "in another time would have been branded treason . . ."

Radford has denied under oath that he was the source of the Anderson material.

Both Radford and Welander have bitterly complained that they have never been allowed to see the plumbers' report on the case nor the Pentagon's investigation.

In his prepared statement, Welander concedes that after two trips to Asia which Radford—at White House request—made with Haig and Kissinger, the admiral did receive from Radford "a collection of tissue copies and rough drafts of staff reports, memoranda of conversations, and outgoing cables."

He acknowledged that this did "supplement" and "highlight" information that the admiral got through normal channels.

But Welander claims he never had any reason to doubt "Radford's statements to me that he acquired the documents in the regular course of his clerical duties." Radford has stated he was asked to get everything "I could get my hands on" with the warning: "don't get caught."

Chairman John C. Stennis (D-Miss.) said after yesterday's session that the committee had finished hearing from Radford and Welander "for the time being" and would now review the testimony before deciding when to resume the hearings and what witnesses to call next. He said the committee would resume work on the military procurement bill today.