

Ex-Colonel Says Admiral Gave Officers Data Obtained Illicitly at White House

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WASHINGTON, Feb. 22—A former aide to the Joint Chiefs of Staff said today that Rear Adm. Robert O. Welander routinely provided key Joint Staff Officers with illicitly obtained White House documents in the last half of 1971.

James A. MacDonald of Dallas, a retired Marine Corps colonel, said in a telephone interview that he had been handed at least four such documents by Admiral Welander and — after obtaining whatever information was desired, if any — returned them directly to the office of Adm. Thomas H. Moorer, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

The documents he was given, Mr. MacDonald said, provided the Pentagon with advance information on pending high-level White House and National Security Council meetings with President Nixon and Henry A. Kissinger, then Mr. Nixon's chief adviser for security affairs.

"This didn't bother my conscience," the former officer said. "I had no feeling that we were being devious or anything like that." He said that most of the information contained in Admiral Welander's memorandums was officially provided to Admiral Moorer at some later point.

"Maybe the admiral didn't know all this at 11 A.M.," Mr. MacDonald said, "but he'd get it anyway at 3 P.M."

Mr. MacDonald's assertions sharply contradicted the recent testimony of Admiral Moorer and Admiral Welander, both of whom have denied any knowledge of the unauthorized passing of documents except in two cases.

Mr. MacDonald, while defending the activities of Admiral Welander as "very legitimate and normal functions" for a liaison officer, did say that the "format for giving us the documents might have been better inspired."

Most of the White House documents he saw, he said, were critical of or questioning about military policies and recommendations due to be debated at later high-level meetings. His function was to prepare answers to the anticipated queries in advance, Mr. MacDonald said.

'Pretty Hot Stuff'

"The White House was touchy about this stuff," he said of the documents provided by Admiral Welander. "So we didn't take the staff lieutenant colonels and majors who pre-

pared the answers into our confidence," he said. "We'd tell the, 'Don't say anything about this. It's pretty hot stuff. Just go and get the answers.'"

The former officer added that he had never been permitted to keep the documents in his personal safe but instead pinned the required answers to the original White House document "and either gave it back to Welander or sent it directly into the admiral's [Admiral Moorer's] office."

"I guess," he added, "that in the climate that exists today, this might be looked upon as something less than noble."

Admiral Moorer testified before the Senate Armed Services Committee on Feb. 6 that he had received two batches of materials after Yeoman 1st Cl. Charles E. Radford, then assigned to the White House liaison office with Admiral Welander, traveled to the Far East and Southeast Asia in mid-1971 with Mr. Kissinger and his chief deputy on the National Security Council, Gen. Alexander M. Haig Jr.

Asked by Senator Robert Taft Jr., Republican of Ohio, whether he had received any other unauthorized White House papers, the admiral said, "I am not aware of any, and I do not recall any. But," he added, "there could be other papers."

In his testimony before the committee yesterday, Admiral Welander acknowledged that he had forwarded to Admiral Moorer two batches of material that he said had been "offered" to him by Yeoman Radford.

Hundreds of other documents did flow in "eyes only" envelopes from his White House office to the Pentagon office of Admiral Moorer, Admiral Welander testified, but — contrary to Yeoman Radford's assertions — "It was an authorized flow of information . . . documents were not to my knowledge 'stolen' or 'purchased.'"

Yeoman Radford contended in previous testimony that he had been urged and instructed by Admiral Welander and his predecessor in the liaison office, Rear Adm. Rembrandt C. Robinson, to gather unauthorized documents and funnel them to Admiral Moorer's office.

Among the documents thus taken, according to the Senate testimony, was the private report of a conversation between Mr. Kissinger and Chou En-lai, the Chinese Premier, which was sent to President Nixon after Mr. Kissinger's secret trip to China in July, 1971.

In the telephone interview, Mr. MacDonald confirmed some of Yeoman Radford's Senate testimony. The former colonel acknowledged that, as Yeoman Radford had told the Senate, the material handed to him by Admiral Welander had been "sanitized" — that is, stripped of all identification markings to prevent tracing.

In his testimony, Yeoman Radford told of being requested by Admiral Welander to assemble an advance agenda for a Presidential meeting involving Admiral Moorer shortly after the China trip in July, 1971. Later, he said, he was told by Admiral Welander that "I had no idea how helpful it was for the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs to walk into a meeting and to know what is going to be said."

In his testimony, Admiral Welander acknowledged receiving some materials from the yeoman at that time, but said, "I thought little about it." Admiral Welander also suggested that Yeoman Radford might have manufactured the military-spying allegations after being accused in December, 1971, of leaking White House papers on the India-Pakistan war to Jack Anderson, the columnist.

Former national security aides criticized the alleged pilfering of agenda items in subsequent interviews. "It's not all right" said one former high-ranking aide to Mr. Kissinger after being informed of Mr. MacDonald's remarks. Kissinger wouldn't like it. It's cheating, and everybody knows it's cheating, but it goes on."