

Kennedy Denies Profane Clash

WASHINGTON (AP) — Sen. Robert F. Kennedy said Tuesday his Feb. 6 discussion of Vietnam with President Johnson was not without friction, but he branded as inaccurate and untrue reports they clashed profanely.

In the first direct word from either, the New York Democrat said his meeting with Mr. Johnson at the White House was not as explosive as it has been described in some published accounts, particularly in this week's issue of Time magazine.

Aides to Mr. Johnson also termed untrue some of the more lurid exchanges described. At the White House, the denials by Kennedy lieutenants were welcomed. However, the administration remained inclined to blame the senator's associates for raising the ruckus in the first place.

According to Time's account, Mr. Johnson castigated Kennedy for his views on Vietnam and told him that if he kept on "talking like this, you won't have a political future in this country within six months. In six months all you doves will be destroyed."

Time said Kennedy, retorted by calling the chief executive an SOB, asserting that "I don't have to sit here and take that ----."

KENNEDY TOLD a reporter this was untrue.

Q. Did either you or the President use any swear words?

A. No.

Q. Did he accuse you of upsetting peace negotiations because of reports you were bringing home a peace feeler?

A. No.

Q. Did he say he never wanted to talk to you again?

A. No.

Q. Did he say you didn't have a political future because of the stand you have taken?

A. I don't want to talk about that.

Q. Did he say you would have the blood of American boys on your hands if secret peace negotiations were upset?

A. Not in that context, but I don't want to talk about that.

ALL THE CONTROVERSY stems from a Johnson-Kennedy meeting following the senator's return from Europe amid rumors he had received in Paris a significant peace feeler from North Vietnam.

Kennedy emerged from the 45-minute session with Mr. Johnson denying he had received such a feeler.

At the White House, Press Secretary George Christian and presidential assistant Walt Rostow said the Time report was erroneous both in tone and in particulars.

Two Kennedy sidekicks, Frank Mankewicz in Washington and Adam Walkinsky, who was in Oklahoma City with Kennedy, said approximately the same thing. However, they did not go so far as to deny that Mr. Johnson and Kennedy had forcefully presented their often disparate views on Vietnam.

IN MANY RESPECTS, the Time account repeated previously published reports of a stormy Johnson-Kennedy meeting. Newsweek magazine also carried substantially the same account in its current issue, but Newsweek did not say Kennedy called Mr. Johnson an SOB or told the President, "I don't have to sit here and take that ----."

Christian, asked about the Time account, said:

"I've talked to three of the four people who attended the meeting and according to their recollections, nothing like that ever took place."

He emphasized he was referring not only to the direct quotes attributed to the two men, but "to the whole general tone of the reported conversation."

He specifically denied Time's account that Mr. Johnson told Kennedy he never wanted to see him again and Kennedy's reported resort to intemperate language.

There was no name-calling, Christian said.

ROSTOW, WHO was present at the meeting, said, "There's not a word of truth in those quotations."

The two Kennedy aides also denied any use of profanity by the senator, and the report that Mr. Johnson told Kennedy he did not want to see him again.

Actually, Mr. Johnson and Kennedy met face to face again last week, at the swearing in of Atty. Gen. Ramsey Clark. They shook hands.

Referring to Time's account, Mankewicz said, "There are substantial inaccuracies. It is way off."

He added that it contains "a collection of things that were never said."

HE SAID KENNEDY "never used the language described in there and, for that matter, neither did the President. The language is just all wrong. Nothing like that was said."

He also denied another remark Mr. Johnson was reported to have made to Kennedy—that "the blood of American boys will be on your hands."

However, Mankewicz did leave open the possibility—perhaps the likelihood—that the meeting was less than cordial.

"There was some hot discussion," Mankewicz said.