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SENATE TO STUDY TALKS IN MADRID

Leaders Stirred by Reports
of Move by U.S. General

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Feb. 25 — Senate leaders promised today to investigate reports that a senior United States general was quietly seeking to extend American defense commitments to Spain in return for an additional five-year extension of military base rights there.

Defense officials confirmed that Gen. David A. Burchinal of the Air Force, who had been assigned by the Joint Chiefs of Staff in December to begin discussions with Spanish military commanders on purely military matters, had later been overruled by civilian leaders in the Defense Department.

These sources said that General Burchinal, who is now negotiating in Madrid, had agreed with the Spanish representatives on various formulas that would have committed the United States to help defend Spain from imprecisely defined "threats" from the Arab countries of North Africa. Despite General Burchinal's strong protests, the formula was substantially watered down.

State Department officials said that the United States-Spanish talks on renewal of the base agreements, which expire on March 26, are still under way. They declined further comment.

'Serious Questions' Raised

The Senate Majority Leader, Mike Mansfield, Democrat of Montana, said that the report "raises serious questions as to who shall conduct the foreign policy of the United States, be it the Pentagon or, as the Constitution states, the State Department under the direction of the President."

Senator J. W. Fulbright, Democrat of Arkansas, who is chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, said that he was "very interested indeed" in the report.

Senator Stuart Symington, Democrat of Missouri, the

chairman of a new foreign relations subcommittee that is investigating the role of the military in United States Foreign policy, promised to "get all the facts in regard to this commitment and in regard to all other commitments of this nature."

Authoritative informants who asked not to be identified said that General Burchinal, the deputy United States commander in Europe, was assigned in December to the task of negotiating with Spain by Gen. Earle G. Wheeler, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. General Burchinal is a former head of the Joint Planning Staff.

Talks Broke Down

The assignment followed a breakdown in the United States-Spanish negotiations on Sept. 26, 1968, when the latest five-year period formally ended. The original 1953 agreements provide in case of deadlock for six months of further negotiations and, failing agreement there, for a year's withdrawal period.

Spain had requested several \$1.2-billion in United States assistance cut this to \$700-million. The United States has been unwilling to offer more than \$100-million in arms plus other benefits in return for maintaining its two major air bases and a large nuclear submarine base at Rota, Spain, until 1973.

To soothe the ruffled Spanish feelings, Secretary of State Dean Rusk proposed—and the Spanish Government accepted—unpublicized United States-Spanish military talks in Madrid to ascertain the exact nature of the "threat" to Spain, the "tasks and missions" of the Spanish armed forces and what arms the United States could provide to assist them.

In defining the "threat," informants here say, General Burchinal overstepped his instructions. When he returned to the United States in late January he presented civilian officials in the Pentagon with a formula that shocked many of them.

"It was imprecise," one informant said. "His agreement with the Spanish on tasks and missions was fairly innocuous, but his agreement to consider threats from North Africa as joint threats—applicable equally to the United States—raised hob. We couldn't buy this. He protested strongly but he was reversed and sent back with a much watered-down version."