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SPEECH BY REPRESENTATIVE GERALD R. FORD, JR.

on floor of House of Representatives March 16, 1961

Mr. Speaker,

On March 12, 1961 the office of Assistant Secretary of Defense (Public Affairs) issued the following statement:

'The report that General Lemnitzer has protested to Secretary McNamara that the Chiefs are being by-passed or edged out of crucial military decisions by the Kennedy Administration is simply without foundation.'

This statement was carried on Monday, March 13th, in many of the newspapers and other news media of the United States and probably in many of the newspapers throughout the world. This statement was issued by the Office of Asst. Secretary of Defense (Public Affairs) because the public charge had been made previously that Gen. L. L. Lemnitzer, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, had protested the transfer of control of space development to the Air Force.

The aforementioned statement issued by the Office of Asst. Secretary of Defense (Public Affairs) is, to say the least, a "half truth". The Asst. Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs knew or should have known the facts and he should not now try to cover them up. Gen. Lemnitzer as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs did submit a statement dated March 2, 1961 in opposition to the Draft Directive on Assignment of Space Systems Development. In Gen. Lemnitzer's reply to the D.O.D. Draft Directive he stated that the Joint Chiefs did not have a full opportunity to study this matter which according to him has far-reaching military implications.

Gen. Lemnitzer's reply or memorandum also strongly protested the D.O.D. Draft Directive on the basis that such a move would result in an overall loss of effectiveness through the failure to utilize the full potential of our total defense resources.

The Office of Asst. Secretary of Defense (Public Affairs) by semantics is seeking to deny to the public the facts; facts the public is entitled to know. The release of Sunday, March 12th, by the Office of Asst. Secretary of Defense Sylvester is a clear-cut distortion.

This deliberate attempt to gloss over the true facts is difficult to understand when on Tuesday, March 14th, Mr. Edward R. Murrow, the new director of the U. S. Information Agency, categorically stated the U. S. must tell the "truth" both to Americans and to the world. On this date Mr. Murrow lectured members of the Senate on complete frankness both at home and abroad. I suggest that this honorable approach be conveyed or transmitted to the Asst. Secretary of Defense (Public Affairs). He should follow the same guide lines in the future even though his office did not do so in this specific case.



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