

Accuse AF Out of Congress, Symington Dares Van Zandt

Vinson Says B-36 Attack Based Only on Rumors

BY EDWARD JAMIESON.

WASHINGTON, Aug. 12.—A challenge to make charges against the Air Force and its activities in connection with the B-36 outside of congressional immunity so that "we can have the proper recourse" was flung late Friday at Representative Van Zandt of Pennsylvania by Secretary of Air Symington.

At the same time, Chairman Vinson of the armed services committee, which is conducting a probe of the B-36 program, accused Van Zandt, a member of his own committee, of basing his speech on the floor of the House last May on nothing but "rumors."

Vinson also strongly hinted that, later in the investigation, he will show that Van Zandt's speech before the House "dovetails" with an anonymous document which linked Symington, officials of Consolidated Vultee Aircraft, and top Air Force officers.

The two developments, occurring in a tense atmosphere as the hearing neared a close, climaxed a day in which Symington and General Hoyt S. Vandenberg, chief of staff of the Air Force, made disclosures that they previously have declined to make.

Vandenberg not only told the committee that Soviet Russia presents the only real military threat to the United States and the security of the world, but that the B-36 bomber is the only bomber this nation has today to meet this threat. The B-36 is the only plane which could deliver the atomic bomb to Eurasia from American bases and return, he declared.

Symington, in turn, disclosed for the first time that the B-36 has flown more than 10,000 miles with a bomb load of 10,000 pounds.

He said that the plane had delivered the bomb load more than half way and returned to its home base. Before his statement to the committee Friday, the Air Force had never officially disclosed that the B-36 had flown farther than 9,160 miles.

Both Symington and Vandenberg fully defended their decisions to keep the B-36 in production and this year increasing the number on order to 170 planes. In separate statements to the committee, they flatly declared, confirming previous statements of lower Air Force officers, that the B-36 is the best heavy bomber in the world today and comes as close to being invulnerable to attack by faster planes as is possible.

Secretary Angered.

Seldom in congressional history has a member undergone such a double-barreled attack during a formal session as Van Zandt did Friday.

Symington, whose anger had become evident, made his demand upon the Pennsylvanian after Van Zandt had put a series of questions to him, most of which the secretary either refused to answer or answered with "yep," "nope," or "I don't know."

Suddenly, Symington broke in to say.

"I feel very bitter about the way the congressman has smeared me and the Air Force through his speech on the floor of the House, which was made without any effort on the part of the congressman to get the real facts from us. I consider it a rather disgraceful method of using congressional immunity.

"I wish the congressman would repeat the same speech over the radio, without cloaking it with immunity, so that I could have the appropriate 'recourse,' he declared, looking directly at the committee member.

Should Van Zandt waive his

immunity through such a method, he would be subject to suit in the courts for libel or slander.

Van Zandt declined the offer promptly. Demanding to be heard, he said that he had been hearing "rumors" regarding the B-36 and relations between Consolidated and federal officials for many months.

"I waited patiently for something to be done, but nothing was," he continued. "I finally decided to take steps on my own re-

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1 Feared 6 Hurt b

ORANGE, Aug. 12 (AP).—At least one person was feared buried Friday night beneath a wall which blew out as fire destroyed three two-story business buildings.

Danger of a new explosion from a broken gas line kept workmen from digging into the tons of brick and rubble.

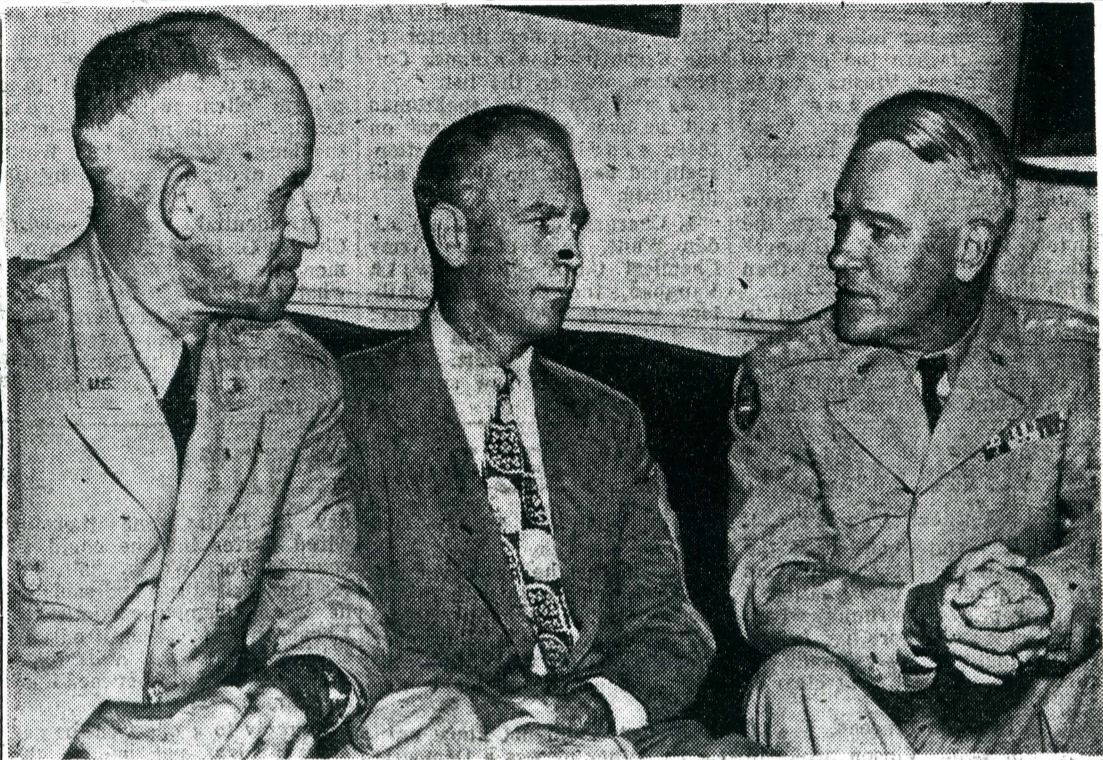
John E. Hickey, 73, suffered a heart attack at his business place near the fire and died in a hospital a short time later.

At least six firefighters and bystanders were injured during a three-hour battle against the flames.

The blaze destroyed an office building, a grocery store and a building owned by Perry Bros. Company of Lufkin. Flames leaped to the Orange National Bank Building and damaged its roof. Several other buildings were damaged by fire, water, smoke and falling debris.

Fire Marshal E. L. Barker said he believed the buildings were evacuated safely.

The "fire out" signal was sounded at 7:12 p. m., almost exactly



TOP ARMY LEADERS—General Bradley v. Secretary of the Army Gordon Grav

—Associated Press Wirephoto.

SYMINGTON CHALLENGES VAN ZANDT

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Probe to Proceed.

At this point, Vinson broke in and after noting that Van Zandt admitted his speech was based only on rumors, declared that the committee will proceed with the investigation hoping to show where and how the rumors originated and if any of them are true.

Earlier, Vinson had taken the unusual action of reading from Van Zandt's speech before the House, citing that part of the speech in which Van Zandt said that he had been informed that Symington, once this year's Air Force budget had been approved, would resign to become the head of a huge plant company combine set up by Floyd Odlum, through his Atlas Corporation. Vinson stressed these words:

"I received this information from sources which I cannot disregard."

Asks Basis.

Vinson asked Committee Counsel Joseph B. Keenan point-blank whether Van Zandt had ever submitted to him, anything to substantiate this charge or provided him with the names of the sources which Van Zandt had cited.

Keenan told Vinson that he had never received anything from Van Zandt which would purport to substantiate this charge against Symington and Odlum. He said, however, that committee investigators have already started their own investigation to see if there is any foundation for the report.

Van Zandt began explaining that he had obtained the information from newspaper columns written by Drew Pearson, Danton Walker and others. As the room roared with laughter, Vinson cut him off and told Keenan to obtain from Van Zandt anything he has, which will be submitted later.

To Disclose Author.

At the same time, Vinson sarcastically remarked that the words "from sources which I cannot disregard" was the only "positive statement" in the whole speech.

Who the author or authors were of the nine-page unsigned writer, now known in the probe as the "anonymous document," will also be disclosed before the hearings are concluded, Vinson declared.

He made this declaration after Symington, in response to a question Rep. Price, of Illinois, said that he now knows the authors of the document. Keenan, however, objected to Symington answering when Price pressed the secretary as to their identities.

Keenan explained that "I want this investigation to be fair and impartial. If I am going to continue as counsel for the committee, I do not want anything said which might injure a person until we have made a complete investigation and have the facts before us."

Sustains Objection

Vinson sustained Keenan's objection, but declared:

"We are going to the bottom of this and we hope—in fact we will—know who the authors of that document were before we are through."

The document made numerous charges with respect to the B-36, involving Odlum, Symington, Secretary of Defense Louis Johnson and others. Prior to the hearings,

contributions last year from Odlum.

He said that he has never discussed the campaign with Odlum and did not know until he attended a dinner in December after the election that Odlum was publicly thanked for his contribution.

"In fact, I did not know until then whether he was a Democrat or a Republican," the secretary declared.

Not Surprised.

Symington said that he was not surprised at the trouble with the B-36 in the early days, because it had happened with the B-29 as well. In response to questions by Representative Brooks of Louisiana, he affirmed that similar problems had arisen with the B-17, though he could not testify from personal knowledge.

Symington, in response to questions from Keenan, disclosed that he made his visit to Fort Worth in May 1948, at the insistence of Amon Carter, after which he felt far more favorably inclined toward the B-36.

He explained that he had planned to speak at a dinner in Dallas of the Air Reserve Association and wired Carter that since he would be in Dallas, he would like to visit Fort Worth and talk to him about the B-36 and conditions in the Consolidated plant.

Later, Symington said, he found that he was also scheduled to attend a luncheon the same

day in Dallas, and therefore wired Carter that he could not come to Fort Worth. "Mr. Carter then called me and said that he was extremely anxious that I come there . . . even if only for a short time. As a result, I worked the visit in between lunch and dinner."

In reply to a question he said that he does not believe that Carter has any financial interest in Consolidated.

"He was very anxious about the future of the plant because of the threat of unemployment to many people in Fort Worth and the general economy of the city," Symington declared.

When Symington completed his testimony Friday afternoon, Vinson announced that hearings will not be resumed until Aug. 22. Meanwhile, a subcommittee will go to California to obtain the testimony of Gen. H. H. Arnold, who headed the Air Force during the war. Arnold was reported unable to make the trip to Washington.

Hits 'Innuendoes.'

Vandenberg lashed out at the "false rumors and innuendoes," which he told the committee had damaged Air Force morale. He flatly declared that this country's possession of the atom bomb—plus the ability "to deliver it"—provides the major check on "the aggressive designs of Soviet leaders."

The tall slender air chief who has just returned from a military survey in Europe, bluntly told the lawmakers:

"There is only one major military threat to the security of the United States and the peace of the world. It is pointless to talk in riddles—this threat comes from the Soviet Union."

Vandenberg then went on to say that "for the next few years the B-36 provides the spearhead for the ready-for-combat force in being which this country must constantly have at hand."

Although he said he was not obligated professionally to defend Symington "I raise my voice, as any man might, who hears a friend unjustly accused."

'Labored Diligently.'

The general said the air secretary "has labored tirelessly to produce effective and economical air power for the defense of this country." He added:

"That Mr. Symington could have entertained the idea of jeopardizing the security of this country by favoring inferior airplanes for the monetary advantage of a political party or because of the personal influence of any individual manufacturer is unthinkable."

Asked by Keenan if he knew of any attempt to exert political, economic, social or "corrupt" influence in the choice of the B-36, Vandenberg declared:

"The idea is fantastic that any man in uniform in the Air Force would allow himself to be influenced regarding a weapon on depended the lives of the people he would lead."

HOUSING

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Monthan Air Base, Tucson, for the annual prizes awarded for proficiency.

Day-Long Meeting.

Ramey announced as the day-long meeting opened that Col. John A. Roberts, now 8th Air Force chief of staff, will assume command next Tuesday of the 7th Bombardment Group of B-36s, succeeding Col. Charles D. Farr, being transferred to the 9th Strategic Reconnaissance Wing at Fairfield-Suisun, Cal., which is soon to be equipped with B-36s.

Col. Cecil Combs, 8th Air Force deputy commander, will also be acting chief of staff until the vacancy is filled.

Roberts will be returning to the group in which he was serving as a B-17 pilot at Clark Field, Manila, when the Japanese attacked that base on Dec. 7, 1941. He served out the remainder of the first Battle of the Philippines in the 19th Bombardment Group, fought on through New Guinea as executive officer, then as commander of the 43rd Group and flew 143 combat missions totaling 907 combat hours before he was sent home in 1945. He participated in the atomic experiments at Bikini in July 1946 and came to Fort Worth as deputy chief of staff for plans of the 58th Wing, which was the cadre from which the postwar 8th Air Force was reactivated in November 1947.

Husband of Dead Woman In Murder Trial He Feared

BY TONY SLAUGHTER, Star-Telegram Staff Writer. QUITMAN, Aug. 12. — Virgil Gilbreath, tall soft-spoken Wood County farmer, Friday told a 115th District Court jury that he

Mrs. Lawrence testified that Mrs. Gilbreath told her before she died that "Mrs. Gene Rogers forced me to take poison at gunpoint."