

A. F. Colonel In B-36 Quiz Denies Deal

Retired Officer Says Rich Home Acquired In Trade for Ranch

LOS ANGELES, Aug. 18 (AP).—A retired Air Force colonel denied Thursday that he acquired an \$85,000 house after favorably renegotiating a wartime contract for Air Secretary Symington's private electrical concern.

The subject was injected into a hearing of the House armed forces subcommittee investigating the B-36 bomber development program. The committee, headed by Rep. Melvin Price of Illinois, concluded here and is flying to San Francisco to question Gen. H. H. (Hap) Arnold, retired Air Force chief, Friday.

Committee Counsel Joseph B. Keenan called as a witness Franklin C. Wolfe, Beverly Hills, Cal. He is an Air Force armament expert who retired Nov. 1, 1944 after 20 years service.

Keenan said an anonymous document in the committee's hands alleged that a turret contract with Symington's Emerson Electric Co., St. Louis, was renegotiated by Colonel Wolfe whereby rework on defective turrets was paid for by the government instead of the company. Keenan said the documents also stated that Colonel Wolfe now lives in an \$85,000 house.

Colonel Wolfe replied that he had nothing to do with renegotiation of the Emerson Electric contract which was done before Symington became air secretary. Wolfe said, however, that after he retired he was employed as an armament consultant by Emerson Electric, earning \$15,000 to \$20,000 thereby between November 1944 and September 1945. He said he also was consultant for other concerns but received nothing from any of them before he left the service.

The house in Beverly Hills, he said, actually is a four unit apartment building worth about \$35,000. He said he owned it for a short time by trading a San Diego County ranch but then traded back and does not own it now although he rents a \$50 a month apartment in it.

'To Silence Protests.'

Later Keenan said the anonymous document inferred that James H. Kindelberger, chairman of North American Aviation Co., was given a fat personal service contract to silence possible protests over cut-backs of North American contracts on F-93 fight-

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B-36 PROBE

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ers and B-45-C four-jet bombers early this year.

"That's absurd," said Kindelberger. "My contract is between me and my board of directors. It has nothing to do with the armed forces."

Aircraft builders Kindelberger, Robert E. Gross, president of Lockheed Aircraft and Donald W. Douglas, chairman of Douglas Aircraft, unanimously paid high tribute to the honesty, integrity, ability and judgment of Air Force officers controlling airplane development.

They agreed, too, that they never encountered political pressure or influence in the handling of such programs. Particularly they praised Generals Kenny, LeMay and Vandenberg.

When Keenan asked whether the nation's air defense program is safer in the hands of the present military experts and private industry executives than it would be if the government took over, Kindelberger snapped:

'Kill It in Five Years.'

"If the government took over I think it would kill it off (the industry) in five years. They did it in less time than that in France."

The plane builders said they knew of no scheme for Symington to become head of some nebulous aircraft combine. Gross and Kindelberger, however, said they discussed possible mergers with Floyd Odlum, head of Consolidated Vultee Aircraft Corp., builder of the B-36.

Gross said that in 1946 he explored possible merger with Aviation Corp., then controlling Convair, but the deal ended amid possible antitrust complications and the temporary grounding of Lockheed's Constellation planes. Gross said that last fall he was offered Odlum's common stock in Convair, about 20 per cent, but he didn't want it because he did not feel it represented certain control. He said he did not consider Lockheed and Convair competitors.

Kindelberger said that in March 1948 Odlum asked him if he didn't think it would be a fine idea for Convair and North American to merge.

"I told him no," said Kindelberger. The committee laughed and dropped the subject.