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Is Our Intelligence Adequate?

By Robert S. Allen

If Senator Wayne Morse, of Oregon, has his way, the Armed Services Committee, as part of its investigation of the MacArthur controversy, will pry into another one that has been sputtering threateningly for a long time. This is the vital question of the competence and effectiveness of our intelligence system.

Because of the secret nature of this moot subject, the protracted argument about it has been largely "off the record." But at times the discussion has been bitter and heated, particularly after a resounding intelligence bungle.

A glaring example of this was the surprise Communist attack in Korea last June.

As a member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, Morse wants to find the reason for that intelligence fiasco and others that have occurred in the Far East. He particularly wants to know whether the fault was MacArthur's G-2, long under fire, or that of the Pentagon, the recently-reorganized Central Intelligence Agency, or what?

To conduct this aspect of the probe, Morse has prepared a long list of questions based on data he has gathered over a considerable period of time. This includes a report on information about the enemy that was in MacArthur's hands at the time he launched his disastrous "home-by-Christmas" offensive.

While Morse is squaring off to try his hand at turning the spotlight on the intelligence system, the House Appropriations subcommittee on the State Department budget had a go at the matter but with little results. The attempt was made during a private interrogation of W. Park Armstrong, Jr., Special Assistant for Intelligence.

Although closely questioned by Representatives Daniel Flood and John Rooney, the State Department official said little except to deny that our intelligence is incompetent.

Following is a summary of this testimony as recorded in the unpublished transcript:

Flood: "There is a widespread opinion that United States intelligence is incompetent and inefficient and is manned and operated by a lot of rank amateurs who aren't worth the powder to blow them up. What about that?"

Armstrong: "May I speak off the record?"

Flood: "I don't see why you should. It seems to me it would be very desirable for you to put some kind of an answer to my question

on the record for your own protection."

Armstrong: "Then I disagree with that opinion 100 per cent. However, there is no particular harm in that opinion prevailing."

Rooney: "What do you mean by that?"

Armstrong: "Well, the less competent we are considered to be, the easier our job will be. There will be less resistance to our operations."

Flood: "Now in view of that brilliant defense you have just made, have you any comment on the quality and quantity of the work of the intelligence service in Korea?"

Armstrong: "I think it's only fair to point out that it is inconceivable to expect that intelligence will never miss some piece of informa-



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tion that might have made a big difference."

Flood: "Would you say that all reasonable and intelligent information was present concerning the crossing of the Yalu River by the Chinese Reds last year?"

Armstrong: "No, I couldn't say that."

Flood: "What was missing?"

Armstrong: "It is now apparent that we were not in possession of all the necessary intelligence. But whether it was possible to get that is still obscured by conditions there."

Rooney: "Is that failure being examined by your office?"

Armstrong: "It is primarily a field problem, but we are examining it."