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Press Release - Top Administration Officials to Testify in Drug Abuse Hearings

Edmund S. Muskie

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From the SUBCOMMITTEES ON INTERGOVERNMENTAL
RELATIONS and EXECUTIVE REORGANIZATION
AND GOVERNMENT RESEARCH

Committee on Government Operations

Old Senate Office Building

Washington, D.C. 20510

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FOR RELEASE:
Sunday, A.M.
July 11, 1971

WASHINGTON -- Senators Edmund S. Muskie (D-Me.) and Abraham Ribicoff (D-Conn.) said today that they have invited four top Administration officials to testify in executive session about the alleged participation of high Laotian, Thai and Vietnamese officials in the illegal drug traffic in Southeast Asia.

Senator Muskie is Chairman of the Subcommittee on Intergovernmental Relations and Senator Ribicoff is Chairman of the Subcommittee on Executive Reorganization and Government Research which are holding joint hearings on legislation to create a White House office to direct the Federal anti-drug effort.

The two legislators said they have asked Attorney General John Mitchell, Secretary of State William P. Rogers, Defense Secretary Melvin Laird, and CIA Director Richard Helms to appear at the executive session.

Senator Muskie requested the executive session at a hearing of the two Subcommittees last week after Attorney General Mitchell testified that top officials of the allied governments were involved in the illegal drug traffic that is infesting American servicemen in Southeast Asia. Mitchell agreed to furnish the Subcommittees with details of that involvement at a closed session.

The two Senators said that they have requested the Administration officials appear at the executive session at the earliest possible date.

Attachment: Letter to Attorney General John Mitchell

UNITED STATES SENATE

July 9, 1971

The Honorable John N. Mitchell
Department of Justice
Constitution Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D. C. 20530

Dear Mr. Attorney General:

At the July 7 joint hearings of the Subcommittees on Intergovernmental Relations and Executive Reorganization and Government Research, you stated that you believe an executive session of the two subcommittees would be the appropriate vehicle for discussion of the complicity of top Laotian, Thai and Vietnamese officials in the drug traffic in Southeast Asia.

Certainly, as the President has indicated in his recent message to Congress, our Nation can have no greater priority than stamping out drug traffic both here at home and among our servicemen in Southeast Asia.

The alleged participation of officials in the governments of our allies in Southeast Asia in the heroin traffic that is infesting American troops in South Vietnam is a matter of the greatest concern. It is imperative that the members of the two subcommittees considering the President's new drug legislation know what part officials of allied governments are playing in the drug traffic and what steps our government is taking and can take to stop that illegal activity.

For that reason, we are requesting that you, along with Secretary of State Rogers, Defense Secretary Laird, and CIA Director Helms, appear before our two subcommittees in executive session at the earliest possible date to discuss this critical situation.

Thank you for your co-operation.

Sincerely,

Abraham Ribicoff
Chairman, Subcommittee on
Executive Reorganization
and Government Research

Edmund S. Muskie
Chairman, Subcommittee on
Intergovernmental Relations