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Senate OK On CIA Role In Viet Nam

From the Herald Tribune Bureau
 WASHINGTON.

The super-secret Central Intelligence Agency yesterday got its second clean bill of health within 24 hours on its not-so-secret operations in embattled South Viet Nam.

After CIA director John A. McCone had been quizzed in private for three and a half hours by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, three key committee members dismissed charges that the agency had strayed from the U. S. policy line in Viet Nam's Buddhist-government clash.

Their findings backed up a firm defense of the CIA's operations by President Kennedy at his news conference Tuesday. The President rejected as "wholly untrue" charges that the CIA had acted in conflict with other U. S. agencies in Viet Nam and with Washington's policy. He praised the outgoing CIA chief in Viet Nam, John H. Richardson—now stripped of his diplomatic cover and transferred—as a "dedicated public servant."

The committee chairman, Sen. J. William Fulbright, D., Ark., said yesterday that although "there have been some mistakes" the CIA had been "unfairly criticized."

He was supported by Sen. Stuart Symington, D., Mo., who called the charges against the intelligence agency "totally without foundation." Sen. Bourke B. Hickenlooper, R., Iowa, chimed in that there was "not a shred of reliable evidence" that the CIA had overstepped its assigned role in Viet Nam.

As the Senators probed and approved the secret agency's now widely publicized operations, search parties pushing through the Vietnamese jungle recovered the bodies of 12 American servicemen who died in two helicopter crashes Tuesday.

The dead were nine Marines, including Corp. Charles F. Tuttle of Uniondale, L. I., and three Navy men. A U. S. Air Force pilot whom the helicopters had been searching for after his T-28 fighter bomber crashed was also dead.

Investigators will determine whether the helicop-

ters were shot down by Communist ground fire. Three miscounted reports the craft had crashed into each other in the air.

The continued defense of the CIA countered a wave of accusations which had brought the agency under the heavy fire it had suffered since its involvement in the 1961 Bay of Pigs invasion fiasco.

A key incident inspiring the criticism was the raiding of Buddhist pagodas last Aug. 21 by Vietnamese government forces, including "special forces" units bossed by Counselor Ngo Dinh Nhu, brother of President Ngo Dinh Diem. The CIA had helped organize the "special forces" as a crack counter-guerilla unit.

Mr. Nhu, whose fiery wife is now in New York, favors a tough policy against the Buddhists, who have been resisting alleged religious persecution by the Diem government. The clash presented a dilemma for the U. S., which was committed to backing the government against the Communists but deplored the repression of the Buddhists.

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