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Senatorial irresponsibility

Sen. Stephen M. Young did his country a grave disservice when he said he had been told the Central Intelligence Agency hired South Vietnamese to pose as Viet Cong and kill men and rape women with the objective of discrediting the Communists.

Following a flat denial by the CIA, an uproar in both CIA and State Department, and sharp words by fellow solons, the Ohio senator changed his story considerably.

However, change it as much as he will, the damage has been done. The Communists will have a field day with this charge. They would even if Young completely repudiated his own remarks or established that he was misquoted.

The entire affair sounds like a prime example of irresponsibility.

Young first said he got his information from a CIA man. Later he said it was an American military officer.

If the CIA employed some South Vietnamese agents to pose as Viet Cong, there is nothing unusual in that. All intelligence agencies do that sort of

thing. The damage comes from Young's charge that the CIA hired them to commit atrocities, or his careless words which permitted him to be quoted as saying that, whichever it was.

In his subsequent elaboration of his remarks, described as "meandering," Young repeated that "It was alleged to me that several of these executed two village leaders and raped some women." He indicated at one point he believed this report, then added, "I don't believe such an incident occurred."

Young's partial repudiation of his first remarks will never catch up with the original atrocity story. He has seriously damaged his country in the propaganda cold war and compromised his own reputation for responsibility.

The Reds are still repeating, it will be recalled, the lie that the United States employed germ warfare in Korea. A senator should have enough judgment not to sound off on such a subject until he is sure he knows what he is talking about—which Young obviously wasn't.

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