

January 15, 1965

SNCC ASKS MCNAMARA TO INVESTIGATE
GOV. WALLACE'S AIR BASE SPEECH

ATLANTA, GEORGIA - Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara has been asked to investigate the commander of an Alabama Air Force base where Alabama Governor George Wallace is scheduled to appear February 2.

The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) asked McNamara to investigate Colonel Richard Ault, Commander of Craig Air Force Base in Selma, Alabama, scene of a two-year SNCC voter registration drive.

SNCC Chairman John Lewis asked McNamara in a letter "what sort of leadership is Colonel Ault showing to Negro and white troops when he moves ahead to bring segregation back on the base."

Lewis said Wallace, who last appeared in Selma before the local White Citizens Council, was "a man who advocates defiance of the federal judiciary, the President and the United States Constitution."

SNCC has twice before requested action from McNamara and Colonel Ault concerning the base's policies toward segregation in Selma.

Most recently, SNCC Alabama Project Director John Love asked McNamara in December, 1964 to place segregated establishments in Selma "off limits" to Craig personnel after Negro airmen testified in federal court they were denied service in Selma restaurants and movie theatres.

Lewis, who will be in Selma for a January 18 mass registration attempt by local Negroes, quoted a June 21, 1963 directive from President Kennedy directing McNamara to instruct base commanders to "take leadership in the drive to desegregate off-base facilities."

Governor Wallace's February 2 appearance at the Craig Air Force Base Officer's Club is sponsored by the Selma and Dallas County Chamber of Commerce. Leon Jones, newly elected Treasurer of the Chamber, was Chairman of the Dallas County White Citizens Council, Lewis said. Selma was the Alabama birthplace of the racist Citizens Councils. The Dallas County Citizens Council is the largest in the state.

Lewis said the racial situation in Selma "had worsened" since the two SNCC appeals to McNamara for "positive action against segregation in Selma."

Wallace's appearance January 7 before the Tennessee School Board Association also drew fire from civil rights leaders in that state.

Accompanying Wallace to the February 2 meeting at Craig Air Force Base will be Cecil Jackson, Jr., the governor's legal adviser, who was his strategist for his "school house door" stand in Tuscaloosa.