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White House Says It Never Requested Wiretaps of Press

WASHINGTON, Feb. 26 (UPI)—The White House said today that no one on President Nixon's staff had ever requested or been aware of any telephone taps on newsmen's telephones.

Mr. Nixon's press secretary, Ronald L. Ziegler, said that the use of such taps "would be counter to our philosophy, of course." No one on the President's staff, he said, "ever requested or was aware of taps on reporters' phones."

Mr. Ziegler's comments came in response to a report in Time magazine that the Federal Bureau of Investigation, under orders from the Administration, had tapped the phones of both newsmen and White House aides in an attempt to trace possible leaks to the press.

Time said that "four different sources in the Government" had reported the wiretapping. It said the practice had began three years ago over the objections of J. Edgar Hoover, then the F.B.I. director.

The F.B.I. said it would have no comment on the Time article. A spokesman said, "We are just letting the President and Mr. [Richard G.] Kleindienst [the Attorney General] handle it."

Mr. Ziegler said the White House no longer had staff members assigned to tracking down news leaks.

Following publication of the Pentagon papers, the White House assigned a group, often referred to as "the plumbers," to attempt to discover and stop leaks of information to the press.