

Aid to Writer Approved by Kissinger

By Murrey Marder

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A State Department inquiry into alleged news leaks will have to determine what Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger meant when he told senior officials "to be helpful" to writer Edward R.F. Sheehan.

Kissinger "gave his general okay to be helpful in responding to Mr. Sheehan's questions," department spokesman Robert L. Funseth acknowledged yesterday. "But the secretary never authorized anyone to reveal the contents of classified documents and had no idea such was being done," Funseth said.

Deputy Under Secretary of State Lawrence S. Eagleburger, who serves as Kissinger's chief of staff, has been designated to conduct the in-house inquiry into possible leaks to Sheehan.

But Kissinger himself already "has personally interviewed several officials who may be involved," Funseth said.

Asked what Kissinger meant by telling senior officials "to be helpful" to Sheehan, Funseth said: "I can't give you a specific answer to that question. It is something that has to be decided on a case-by-case basis, and the official has to use his judgment."

The inquiry is unusual because Kissinger and other senior officials admittedly talked with Sheehan about the Middle East negotiations where virtually all departmental information of any consequence carries some form of secrecy classification.

Nevertheless, Funseth said, "The department is attempting to determine if any State Department officials briefed Mr. Sheehan on the basis of any classified documents. It is not, in

the department's judgment, a trivial matter."

The controversy centers on extended accounts of conversations between Kissinger and Arab and Israeli leaders which appeared in Sheehan's article on Kissinger's shuttle diplomacy in the quarterly magazine, *Foreign Policy*.

Funseth yesterday denied a report by columnist Joseph Kraft in *The Washington Post* Tuesday that Kissinger himself was "a party" to this leak of information, "made through Assistant Secretary Alfred Atherton . . ." Funseth said, "That's false."

Kissinger met with Sheehan "for about 30 minutes" last Oct. 29, but "there was no discussion of classified documents," Funseth said. That was toward the end of Sheehan's reporting. Sheehan also was aboard Kissinger's plane last Aug. 22, between Tel Aviv and Alexandria, Funseth said, but the secretary "does not recall" if he spoke with Sheehan briefly then.

Asked if Kissinger discussed "classified information" with Sheehan, Funseth would say only that he did not discuss "classified documents."