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National Security and The Right to Lie

WASHINGTON — (UPI) — Henry Kissinger's secret trip to Moscow has revived the emotion - charged debate: Does the government have a right to lie to the public?

Although White House Press Secretary Ronald Ziegler recoiled from the phrase "right to lie," he made it plain President Nixon will pursue secret diplomacy when he thinks it is necessary and will take steps to preserve that secrecy.

Kissinger, Nixon's national security affairs adviser, was in Moscow from last Thursday until Monday, conferring with Communist party leader Leonid Brezhnev, while the White House was insisting he was at Camp David.

'Sensitive' Area

Kissinger told newsmen yesterday that both governments decided to keep the mission secret until it was concluded because of the "sensitive" state of relations between the United States and the Soviet Union.

In keeping Kissinger's whereabouts secret, however, the White House went beyond its familiar "no comment."

Deputy Press Secretary Gerald Warren told newsmen Thursday Nixon would go to Camp David for a long working weekend. He said Kissinger was already there.

All Volunteered

On Friday, Ziegler told a news briefing that Nixon was at Camp David conferring with John Erlichman, H. R. Hademan and Kissinger. And on several other occasions the White House listed Kissinger as among the participants in the Camp David talks.

On all occasions the information about Kissinger was volunteered by the White House spokesmen, not offered in response to questions.

When his words were read back to him yesterday, Ziegler said: "I would agree that that was misleading."

Ziegler absolved Warren of lying. He said his deputy too had been kept in the dark

about Kissinger's plans.

Ziegler was asked directly if he believes the government has a right to lie.

Kennedy Aide

"I am not going to fall into a position that I think an official of another administration (did) by making that statement," Ziegler said. He was referring to Arthur Sylvester, Pentagon spokesman in the Kennedy Administration, who once claimed such a right.

Ziegler said Nixon "believes that seeking peace is so important that we must use every channel private and public." He said the President is prepared to take steps to preserve the secrecy of the private channels.

Kissinger has made several unannounced trips including his famous journey to Peking which came after an official announcement that he was ill in Pakistan. Kissinger also made 12 secret trips to Paris to confer with North Vietnamese peace negotiators.