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A Denial on Kissinger Secret Deals

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Secretary of State Henry Kissinger made no secret arrangements with Soviet leaders about the missile limitation agreement of 1972, high administration sources said yesterday.

But Kissinger also did not inform Congress about several aspects of it, and that may have led to confusion over the agreements, the officials said.

The officials, giving their version of the controversy yesterday, said that the story of the negotiations on the agreement was more complicated than originally reported.

They said that the controversy evolved from a misunderstanding over what appeared to be an ambiguity in one of the protocols to the agreement and for a "prediction" Kissinger had made about the number of U.S. missile launchers aboard submarines.

The New York Times Saturday quoted administration sources as having said that Kissinger had reached two secret arrangements with Soviet leaders regarding the agreement, which limits the number of offensive nuclear missile launchers the United States and the Soviet Union can have.

According to the sources quoted in the article, Kissinger had given private assurances to Soviet officials that the United States did not intend to build the maximum number of submarine missile launchers permitted.

At the same time, the arti-

Back Page Col. 5

From Page 1

cle said, he agreed that the Russians, by modernizing old submarines, could exceed their limit on the number of missile launchers. The article said that Congress had not been informed of either arrangement.

Saturday Kissinger issued a statement flatly denying that he had made any secret agreements with the Soviet Union. The secretary, associates said, will hold a news conference today and will appear before a subcommittee of the Senate Armed Services Committee to answer questions on the subject.

The interim agreement on offensive missiles was signed in Moscow in May, 1972, by President Nixon and the Soviet Communist Party Leader, Leonid Brezhnev. It expires in 1977. A treaty that restricted defensive missile systems was signed at the same time.

By the published terms of the agreement on offensive weapons, Moscow was to be allowed to retire 210 of its older missile launchers if it chose to build up to a total of 950 modern submarine missile launchers. The placing of 70 modern launchers in older diesel-powered submarines was said to count within the 950.

But, according to administration sources interviewed last week, Kissinger reached an agreement with Soviet leaders after the agreement was sent to Congress. This understanding was said to have allowed Moscow to add the 70 modern launchers without counting them among the 950, giving a total of 1020.

High administration officials said yesterday, however, that Kissinger and the Soviet leaders were always clear in their understanding that the total of 950 included the 70 modernized launchers. The difficulty, they said, came from staff experts on both sides.

These experts, the officials said, believed that the protocol explaining that part of the agreement was ambiguous, and could be read to permit either 950 or 1020 launchers.

Kissinger, following up the concern of the experts, met with Soviet Ambassador Anatoly Dobrynin in mid-June, 1972. The two agreed that the total should be 950, but apparently did not convey their agreement to the staffs, the officials said.

Thus, when the two staffs met a year later, the Soviet delegation informed the American delegation that its understanding was that Moscow would be allowed 1020 submarine launchers, the officials said. This was conveyed to Kissinger, who again made contact with Soviet leaders and again affirmed their understanding of a 950 total, the officials said.

According to the high administration officials, the matter is now fully settled, with the Soviet Union accepting the 950 total as including modernization of older launchers.

New York Times