

NIXON AIDE TELLS OF F.B.I. INQUIRY

Ziegler Asserts C.B.S. Man
Was in Line for Job

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WASHINGTON, Nov. 11 —

The White House acknowledged today that it had ordered the Federal Bureau of Investigation to conduct a background check on Daniel Schorr, a correspondent here for the Columbia Broadcasting System.

But Ronald L. Ziegler, White House press secretary, contended that the investigation had nothing to do with criticism of Mr. Schorr's reporting by President Nixon and some Presidential aides.

Mr. Ziegler's explanation — that Mr. Schorr had been under consideration in August for appointment to a Federal job — left unanswered, however, several questions about the sincerity of the potential job offer and the manner in which the White House uses the F.B.I.

At a long briefing this morning, Mr. Ziegler strongly disputed suggestions that the bureau investigation had been intended to "intimidate" Mr. Schorr. He said it was unfortunate that the circumstances might lead critics of the Administration to such a conclusion.

Representative Emanuel Celler, Democrat of Brooklyn, who is chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, called the White House explanation a "hoax." He sent a letter to the Attorney General John N. Mitchell, asking for a thorough explanation. Other Democrats in the Senate and House urged Congressional investigations of the incident.

Although agents of the F.B.I. sought background information on Mr. Schorr from a number of his professional associates, relatives, superiors at the network and from Mr. Schorr, himself, he said he had never been offered a position with the Administration.

Mr. Ziegler emphasized that the investigation had shown Mr. Schorr to be "eminently qualified" for the job the White House had in mind. He declined to specify the position, saying that it was in the "environmental area" but he could not be more precise because it was not yet vacant.

Frederic V. Malek, a Presidential aide in charge of the White House "executive search" program, said, however, that he

had concluded that Mr. Schorr "wouldn't be the right guy for the job."

There were other conflicts in the versions given by Mr. Ziegler and Mr. Malek.

The President's press secretary said that there was a "tightly administered procedure" for setting in motion an F.B.I. investigation. In response to questions, however, he said he did not know what the procedure was or who had authority to order the background checks.

Mr. Ziegler insisted that the investigation of Mr. Schorr had been undertaken in compliance with the procedures, through Mr. Malek's search "process." He would not say who ordered it.

Mr. Malek said he had asked his staff to do a "thorough check" and that one of his assistants, whom he would not identify, "kicked off the F.B.I. investigation, which I hadn't asked for."

Although Mr. Ziegler told correspondents that Mr. Malek had been aware of the F.B.I. involvement, Mr. Malek said that he had not.

Mr. Schorr said last night, when the details of the investigation first emerged, that it had proved an embarrassment to him because one of his superiors had asked if he no longer was happy working for the network.

The President directed Mr. Ziegler last March to deny specifically a broadcast account by Mr. Schorr that Mr. Nixon was secretly uncertain whether to go ahead with his antiballistic missile program, then under fire from Senate liberals.

Mr. Nixon himself referred to his unhappiness with the news report during a conversation with a group of women correspondents. He called the account a "lie" but quickly added that Mr. Schorr "just probably had the wrong information."

Following a speech by the President to the Knights of Columbus on Aug. 17 in New York—three days before Mr. Schorr reportedly learned of the investigation—Mr. Schorr said that Roman Catholic educators had been surprised by the President's pledge to provide Government support for parochial schools.

Taking issue with Mr. Schorr's report that the educators knew nothing of White House initiatives in the area, White House aides called him to a meeting the following day "to get all the facts."

More recently, Charles W. Colson, a special counsel to the President, complained to network officials about Mr. Schorr's coverage of the President's economic program.

Mr. Schorr said that he had met Mr. Malek at a cocktail party last month and had asked him about the investigation and supposed job. According to Mr. Schorr, Mr. Malek appeared surprised by the question, promised to call him with information about it, but never did.

Mr. Malek said today that when Mr. Schorr asked him at the party if he was under consideration for a job, "I told him no," because he was no longer being considered.