

Security Wiretap Probers Call for Tighter Controls

Washington

A special Senate panel reported yesterday that controls on wiretaps in national security investigations are clearly inadequate. It recommended that Congress tighten them.

The report is the aftermath of a series of hearings last fall into the practice of warrantless wiretapping and the use made of it by the White House under President Nixon in attempting to plug leaks of classified material. The hearings were held by a Senate Judiciary subcommittee and a Senate foreign relations subcommittee.

The controversy originally centered on the role Henry Kissinger played as chairman of the National Security Council in the wiretapping of 14 federal officials and three newsmen.

The Senate Foreign Relations Committee decided in 1973 that his role did not constitute grounds to bar his nomination as secretary of state. It reaffirmed that decision later.

These were among the panel's findings:

- The White House played a major and "unparalleled" role in initiating and maintaining the "Kissinger wiretaps," and an attempt was made to hide and deny their existence.

- Some of the targets of these taps were physically followed as well as wiretapped.

- President Nixon him-

self was heard talking over the telephone to one of the persons tapped.

- Congressmen and members of congressional staffs were wiretapped, according to testimony by former Attorneys General Elliot Richardson and William Saxbe, who were unable to identify those tapped.

- A presidential directive that the attorney general approve all warrantless wiretaps in advance has not been complied with, and agencies other than the FBI have installed such taps.

- There are no adequate written standards within the executive branch to govern warrantless electronic surveillance.

The report noted that Senator Edward Kennedy plans to introduce soon a bill requiring court orders for all wiretaps, including those installed for national security purposes.

The two subcommittees recommended that Congress also enact guidelines for such surveillance and that it strengthen its own supervisory activities.

New legislation should be considered to further regulate the activities of telephone companies and their employees, the report said.

And it is urged that national security wiretaps be restricted to the FBI, with criminal penalties for others engaging in it.

"The wiretapper or bugger cannot restrict his search to only certain conversations but will inevitably overhear many innocent

discussions that have nothing to do with the information or evidence being sought," the report said.

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