

Pentagon Faulted On Data

But 'Spy Ring' Is Doubted by Schlesinger

By Michael Getler
Washington Post Staff Writer

Secretary of Defense James R. Schlesinger said yesterday there were "clearly improprieties" in the way some secret White House documents were slipped to the Pentagon in 1971, but he added that there is "no evidence of illegalities" or any indication that a military "spy ring" was operating.

Describing his assessment as "tentative judgments," Schlesinger indirectly acknowledged that among the "improprieties" were apparent instances of an individual looking through the briefcase of Dr. Henry Kissinger and rescuing and perhaps copying documents which were due to be destroyed as rough drafts of secret material.

Schlesinger gave his assessment of the lingering White House-Pentagon snooping allegations at a Pentagon press conference yesterday.

It was the defense chief's first public comment on the episode since he launched his informal investigation into the matter last week.

Schlesinger disclosed that one of his aides had been refused permission by White House lawyer J. Fred Buzhardt to obtain a taped interrogation of Adm. Robert O. Welander by David Young.

Young was a member of the White House's secret "plumbers" group investigating the alleged spying activities and the leakage of minutes of White House meetings to columnist Jack Anderson.

Schlesinger said it was not clear why the tape would not be made available, other than that it may be impounded as evidence in forthcoming trials for some of the "plumbers,"

who went on to such activities as the break-in at Daniel Ellsberg's psychiatrist's office.

On paper at least, Schlesinger is still Buzhardt's boss. Though Buzhardt now works at the White House, he is still carried on the Pentagon's books as the general counsel for the Department of Defense.

Under questioning, Schlesinger delivered a polite but clear attack on the operation and assessments of the "plumbers" involved in the investigation, and a strong defense of Adm. Thomas H. Moorer, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Moorer has acknowledged receiving some improperly obtained documents from the White House liaison office that Welander headed.

Schlesinger agreed with Moorer's estimate that the admiral should have been more alert to the unusual fashion in which this material was being sent. But Schlesinger went on to say that Moorer "was not, in my judgment at all familiar with the exuberant methods that had been used to collect the material — which incidentally as a matter of law he is authorized to receive."

"I regard this as an unfortunate item," Schlesinger said, "but that does not detract significantly, from Adm. Moorer's past and future services to this country."

Schlesinger said it was perhaps understandable that

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the public got an image of a military plot from some of the accounts aired publicly. But, he added, "I do not think there was a spy ring or a 'Seven Days in May' situation. I think the whole thing has been blown out of all context."

Praising Moorer's dedication and performance in a number of "delicate and perilous" situations, Schlesinger said President Nixon "certainly never indicated to me any displeasure" with Moorer. But he said questions should be addressed to the White House about whether the President was so enraged over the spying charges that he wanted to fire Moorer in 1971, as has been alleged.

Schlesinger, who has been in office since May, said he was not aware in his investigation of any alleged "blackmail" of higher-ups by an investigator seeking promotion during the secret

1971-72 probe of the situation.

However, he carefully left open the door to the possibility that "more facts" eventually may emerge in several aspects of the case.

In stating that he was no "great admirer" of the work of the plumbers, Schlesinger implied that even if an alleged report by Young pointing to a military "spy ring" was written, its conclusion was wrong. Schlesinger suggested the material developed by the Pentagon in its own investigation two years ago was more reliable and that "I am inclined to doubt that the plumbers have the answer."

As to why charges have not been brought against a Navy yeoman who worked in Welander's liaison office and who unofficially has been linked to the leakage of material to columnist Anderson, Schlesinger said there was only "circumstantial evidence" and "no direct proof that I'm aware of that would necessarily hold up in court."

It was not explained why charges were not brought against someone who might have gone through a briefcase or copied rather than burned classified material.

On other matters:

Schlesinger yesterday sought to amplify his recent statements that some missiles were now being re-targeted on Soviet military installations rather than just cities.

He explained that missiles can have more than one target stored in their electronic brains and that some missiles had always been aimed at military targets. But, he said, such strikes were always programmed as part of an all-out counterattack to a Soviet strike.

What the United States is now doing, he explained, was to change "doctrine" and "planning" for "greater selectivity and flexibility" so that the United States actually has plans to strike military targets in a less than an all-out response to a less than all-out Russian attack.

He said such shifts must be made "explicitly," indicating he was anxious that the Soviets understood this. Schlesinger was noticeably more optimistic about progress in the nuclear arms discussions with the Soviets than he has been before, which could mean the Kremlin may have responded to what he has been saying.

He was also relatively faltering to the Russians. "I believe there has been an improvement in our rela-

tions and discussions," he said. "The Soviet Union has been a prudent power, a sober power . . . and I trust they will continue to demonstrate a measured degree of prudence when they arrive in a condition which is fraught with high risk for them."

Schlesinger provided an unusual amount of information on the forthcoming Pentagon budget request before it is formally presented to Congress in order to correct some recent press accounts of a \$99 billion defense budget "which is not consistent with the realities."

He said defense spending in fiscal 1975, which begins July 1, would be \$85 billion to \$86 billion.

The total obligational authority, which also includes money available for contracting from previous years and for future use, but which is not necessarily spent in fiscal 1975, is expected to amount to about \$92 billion.

A supplemental appropriations request to the current fiscal 1974 budget for pay and to improve readiness would cost on the order of \$5 billion to \$6 billion. But he indicated this would either be spent in the current fiscal year, or is already accounted for in the fiscal 1975 spending estimate of about \$86 billion.