

FEB 20 1974

Kissinger Says Pentagon Got Report on His Secret Trip to China

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Special to The New York Times
WASHINGTON, Feb. 19—

Secretary of State Kissinger has told a Senate committee that he learned in late 1971 that a Navy clerk assigned to his office had pilfered and forwarded to the Pentagon the text of a private report to President Nixon after Mr. Kissinger's secret trip to China earlier that year.

In testimony released today by the Senate Armed Services Committee, Secretary Kissinger—who was then the President's national security adviser—said the documents concerned “a conversation that I had with Chou En-lai [the Chinese Premier] on the occasion of my first visit to China.”

Mr. Kissinger's testimony was the first direct evidence that “eyes only” material intended solely for the President—and not for the Pentagon—had been involved in the military spying operation. The trip marked the beginning of the United States' rapprochement with the People's Republic of China and was not made public until Mr. Kissinger's return.

Transcript Released

“I have to confess I was . . . outraged,” Mr. Kissinger said. He added that the document was taken from a classified burn bag by the clerk, Yeoman 1st Cl. Charles E. Radford, who accompanied Mr. Kissinger on the Asian trip. The yeoman has said he took literally “hundreds” of documents for more than a year, beginning in the fall of 1970, and forwarded them to the office of Adm. Thomas H. Moorer, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

mony tomorrow from Yeoman Radford, also released today a censored transcript of Admiral Moorer's testimony two weeks ago. In his testimony, the admiral said he discussed the military spying allegations in late 1971 with John D. Ehrlichman, then President Nixon's chief domestic adviser, and John N. Mitchell, then Attorney General. Admiral Moorer neither volunteered nor was he asked about the specific content of these conversations.

The released transcripts added even more contradictions to the spying affair. In his testimony, Mr. Kissinger repeatedly tried to play down the significance of the spying activities, telling the Senators about the smooth coordination and close relationship between the National Security Council office and Admiral Moorer.

Secretary Kissinger even joined with Admiral Moorer in suggesting that the impetus for the spying came from Yeoman Radford and not—as the yeoman has said—from his superior officer in the National Security Council's military liaison unit, Rear Adm. Robert O. Welander.

“Eager Beaver” Blamed
“I think some eager beaver was trying to get Browne points with his superior,” the Secretary of State said, “and his superiors, being extremely busy, never bothered to shut it off, especially since they were not really getting anything to which they need to pay particular attention.”

Admiral Moorer has adopted the same themes in public, describing the matter as the work of an “overexuberant” clerk and saying that he did not notice the only two batches of documents that were funneled to him “because they contained no new information.”

At one point during his testimony, Mr. Kissinger joined with Admiral Moorer in expressing doubt about Admiral Welander's authorization of the spying scheme. At a later point however, the Secretary testified that it was only after his interrogation of Admiral Welander that he first learned of the theft of documents from briefcases and burn bags, the sacks used to collect and destroy classified documents for security reasons.

Mr. Kissinger said the tape-recorded interrogation disclosed that “while on a trip with me and on another trip with General Haig [Alexander M. Haig Jr., then a National Security Council deputy], the yeoman had rifled the burn bags, and sometimes the briefcases, and had transmitted these documents to the chairman [Admiral Moorer]. There were also allegations of other documents being taken.”

“I must say,” Mr. Kissinger added, “I was beside myself with this information precisely because the relationship with the Joint Chiefs had been so close.” Admiral Welander's office was summarily abolished, and both the admiral and Yeoman Radford were transferred.

His overt anger at the time notwithstanding, Mr. Kissinger subsequently told the Senators that even the purloined private report on his conversation with Chou En-lai would not have been significant to Admiral Moorer. “This no doubt was an interesting bit of titillating information,” the Secretary said, “but he had been fully briefed on the substance of it.”

Mr. Kissinger acknowledged under specific questioning during his Senate testimony that many details of the secret Paris peace talks with the North Vietnamese were not provided to Admiral Moorer. And the Secretary of State conceded that copies of his confidential and personal reports to the President also would not have been sent to the Pentagon.