

White House Had Channel To Pentagon

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While the military allegedly was snooping on the White House in 1970 and 1971, the White House was receiving some sensitive information on Pentagon activities without the knowledge of the Secretary of Defense, according to reliable sources.

"It was a two-way street," says one well-placed informant, except that the latter operation was authorized but highly "unorthodox."

In contrast to the pilfering of secret White House documents from briefcases and "burn bags" by a Navy yeoman acting either on his own or under orders, the other operation involved a high-level information-passing arrangement set up by the White House, involving the President's national security affairs adviser, Henry A. Kissinger, now Secretary of State, and the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Adm. Thomas H. Moorer.

Though the civilian Secretary of Defense is the immediate superior to the joint chiefs, there technically is a provision under law for a direct channel, under certain circumstances, between the chiefs and the President or his national security adviser.

The manner in which this "channel" was occasionally used during the period after Moorer became chairman in July, 1970, is known to have upset then Defense Secretary Melvin R. Laird and his top deputy, David Packard, when they became aware of it.

Some studies made under Laird's orders by the joint chiefs were forwarded to Kissinger, according to reliable sources, before Laird had made any decisions about what material to send to the White House.

Both Laird and Packard, at certain meetings with the Kissinger-run National Security Council, became aware that Kissinger was working from Pentagon material—sometimes involving their own activities—that neither of the two top Pentagon civilians had provided.

Primarily, the material involved Pentagon civilian and military views on Vietnam

withdrawal policy, an area where there are known to have been important differences between Laird, on the one hand, and the White House and military hierarchy on the other.

Similarly, material to the NSC was passing through the White House liaison office maintained by the joint chiefs beyond the levels which informants say Laird was aware of.

The former Defense Secretary is known to have strongly favored closing that office even before it was shut by the White House after it was fingered in December, 1971, as the center for both the military snooping and leaks to columnist Jack Anderson.

The arrangement with Moorer, said to have been ini-

See PENTAGON, A14, Col. 1

PENTAGON, From A1

tiated by Kissinger, apparently put the admiral in an awkward position since Laird was his boss, but there was this "other channel," as Laird has alluded to it, through which the White House could legally call on Moorer directly.

It has been acknowledged that the phone of Laird's military aide, Gen. Robert E. Pursley, was tapped for more than a year. But investigators say the precise reason why and by whom this was done remains unclear.

They speculate that Pursley, who also at one time worked for Defense Secretary Robert S. McNamara, now head of the World Bank, was suspected in some quarters of the White House of still passing information to McNamara. Sources say there was, in general, a suspicion within the White House that much of the career

Civil Service staff was, in fact, retaining its ties to former Democratic administrations.

The Senate Armed Services Committee has been investigating the allegations of military snooping on the White House.

In testimony taken behind closed doors Feb. 20 and 21, but being released today, there is also an allusion to some out-of-the-ordinary passing of information from the Pentagon to the White House.

Navy Yeoman 1c Charles E. Radford, who worked in the joint chiefs' liaison office and is a central figure in the alleged spying activities, told how he distributed messages to the NSC "that I guess the admiral [his immediate bosses, Adms. Robert O. Welander and Rembrandt C. Robinson] felt would not get normal distribution."

"I never told the people in the Joint Chiefs of Staff that we were giving information to the National Security Council, either on those memos . . . this was done as far as I know without their knowledge, except the admiral's."

Radford, as yeoman, would have no access directly to the joint chiefs, and the job of that office was to facilitate the authorized flow of information. But the Senate questioners did not pursue this point to clarify it.

Radford told how he typed "eyes only" on information received from the Pentagon without such a designation and then passed it on to a commander Howe who worked as an aide to Kissinger's deputy, Gen. Alexander M. Haig Jr. Such a technique would limit distribution within the NSC of documents passed from the military hierarchy.

The testimony of Radford and Welander released today, if anything, further sharpens the contradictions between the two men on whether Radford's

snooping activities were directed by higher-up. It also raises still more questions about Moorer's awareness of what was going on, and whether the secret White House "plumbers" unit had misled Kissinger on the extent of the military snooping.

Though Radford acknowledges "delivering" perhaps 150 documents to the liaison office after his trip with Kissinger to Vietnam and China in July, 1971, Radford says he never got a copy of Kissinger's verbatim notes of his first conversation with Chou En-lai.

Radford says there was only one copy of the two-page memo and that he only saw the first few paragraphs and made notes on it.

In previous testimony, Kissinger said that among the documents he was "informed"

by the plumbers investigating group were taken from his briefcase and eventually

passed on to Moorer was a verbatim account of the Chou conversation.

This was some of the most explosive testimony of the hearing since such a document would have been top secret.

Radford's testimony raises the possibility that the extent of what went on was overstated to Kissinger by the plumbers group.

Welander has charged that former White House aide John D. Ehrlichman—who was in overall charge of the plumbers—tried to get Welander to sign a confession about "the wildest possible, totally false charges of political spying on the White House."

There has been an undercurrent of concern over Ehrlichman's precise role in this episode, mentioned privately by several senators, but thus far he is not scheduled as a witness.

There is a suspicion that in the intense intra-White House struggle for power during the 1970-71 era—when the utmost secrecy was also invoked on sensitive policy changes with Vietnam, the Soviet Union and China—Ehrlichman or others may have been seeking to gain leverage on Kissinger, Moorer and others.

In telling the committee who the visitors to his White House office were, and explaining that his admiral-boss had instructed him never to divulge their names, Radford mentioned only government employees with the exception of "the president of Grumman Enterprises or Incorporated or something."

Grumman is a major Navy contractor, builder of the new and controversial F-14 fighter. Grumman's former president is L. J. Evans, who died a few years ago. Evans' long-time lawyer and the executor of his estate is Charles W. Colson, former White House special counsel now under indictment in the Watergate affair.

Though Welander claims the only thing he ever asked Radford to bring back for him on trips to Asia with Haig and Kissinger were "two ceramic elephants," the admiral acknowledged that a report Radford brought back did attract his attention.

That report was written by a civilian staff member of Kissinger's and was not meant for the joint chiefs. A copy of it was retrieved from a burn bag by Radford.

The report, which Welander brought to Moorer's attention as "something Radford brought back from the trip

with Dr. Kissinger," was an appraisal of the military situation in Vietnam which "was more optimistic by a good bit than what we had been getting from our military commanders in the field."

Both Welander and Moorer

have previously testified that they paid little attention to what Radford had sent back or its origins because it told them little that they didn't already know. In hindsight, both have conceded they should have been more alert.