

The White House And Press Leaks

Washington

The New York Times was apparently a particular target of White House efforts in the summer of 1971 to find and halt leaks to the press, according to the White House transcripts and elaborations supplied by investigative sources.

In recounting the efforts at a meeting of March 27, 1973, John D. Ehrlichman advised President Nixon, according to the transcripts, that some "very serious

partment security arms with White House supervision."

Authoritative sources said that the term "Szulc group" apparently referred to a series of articles written in mid-1971 by Tad Szulc, then a reporter for the Times, that were based on classified intelligence reports.

One article by Szulc, said to have aroused particular concern, disclosed on June 22, 1971, that the United States was then shipping military equipment to Pakistan after the State Department announced the suspension of such sales.

Federal investigators said they possessed evidence that reports compiled from a wiretap on Szulc had flowed at the rate of "two or three a week" into a room in the basement of the executive office that served as a headquarters for the team of investigators that dubbed themselves the "plumbers."

Ehrlichman left no doubt in his conversation with the President, however, that it had been the plumbers who conducted the investigation of Szulc. In a reference to Egil M. Krogh Jr. and David R. Young, the two aides he placed in charge of the unit, he told Mr. Nixon that "Young and Krogh operated that, the whole operation."

The source also named William Beecher, a former

Times Pentagon correspondent who is now a deputy assistant secretary of defense, as another individual on whom the plumbers received regular wiretap reports during the same period.

A report by Beecher in the Times of July 23, 1971, is understood to have caused distress among high diplomatic and military officials in this country who believed that it had disclosed prematurely sensitive elements of the bargaining between the U.S. and the Soviet Union in the strategic arms limitation talks.

Other official sources have identified Beecher as one of four newsmen whose telephones were monitored by the FBI between May, 1969, and February, 1971, as part of a separate program aimed at what Mr. Nixon has termed "serious national security leaks."

It is not clear whether the FBI installed the wiretaps that served as the source of the reports received by the investigation of leaks to newsmen from within the executive branch.

The impetus for the creation of the plumbers was the publication by the Times in June, 1971, of the so-called Pentagon papers, a top-secret Defense Department study of American involvement in the Vietnam war, and Ehrlichman assured the President that the White House had "moved very vigorously on the whole cast of characters in the Pentagon papers thing."

Ehrlichman did not name any of the "characters," but Kathleen Chenow, the plumbers' secretary, has reportedly told federal investigators that, in addition to the names of Szulc and Beecher, she believes she also recalls seeing wiretap

reports on Neil Sheehan, the Times reporter who obtained the Pentagon papers.

Miss Chenow, the investigators said, recalls receiving such reports on Daniel Bilsberg, who was charged by the government with espionage, theft and conspiracy in connection with his admitted leaking of the papers to the press.

New York Times