

Nixon Supports Kissinger on Taps

Washington

President Nixon has come to the support of Secretary of State Henry Kissinger with a letter to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee taking full responsibility for the wiretapping of 17 officials and newsmen between 1969 and 1971.

Senator J. William Fulbright, chairman of the committee, which has begun an investigation of Kissinger's role in the wiretapping, confirmed yesterday that he had received the letter Friday. (2) (U)

He declined to make it public before the rest of the committee had seen it, but he said the letter was a clear and "positive statement" by Mr. Nixon justifying the wiretap program on the ground of national security and stating that he had ordered that the program be

instituted to get to the source of news leaks at the time.

The willingness of Mr. Nixon to come to Kissinger's support has tended to scotch some of the speculation that was current in Washington after Kissinger's recent threat to resign after accusations that he had misled the committee about his role in the wiretapping.

Some political observers believed that a rift was developing between Kissinger and the White House over the apparent reluctance of Mr. Nixon or other White House officials to speak out more strongly on Kissinger's behalf.

The letter apparently repeated in essence what Mr. Nixon already has said in taking responsibility for the wiretap program.

In a statement issued on May 22, 1973, Mr. Nixon, noting that there had been leaks of national security information in 1969, said that "a special program" of wiretaps was instituted.

"I authorized this entire

program," Mr. Nixon said on May 22, 1973. "Each individual tap was undertaken in accordance with procedures legal at the time and in accord with longstanding precedent."

Kissinger, in public news

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conferences, as well as during his confirmation hearings last September before the Foreign Relations Committee, insisted that his role in the wiretapping was to provide the names of members of his National Security Council staff who had access to the information being leaked.

He has also said that some members who had compromising information in their security files were tapped as well as those whose names arose during taps on others.

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