

Rogers Hits 'Obsession' On Security

By Murrey Marder
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Secretary of State William P. Rogers cautioned yesterday that the United States must not become "so obsessed with security matters that laws are freely violated" at the expense of individual liberties.

Rogers is the only survivor of the Nixon administration's original cabinet, and he is one of the President's closest long-time friends. For months he has avoided direct comment on the unusual Watergate practices undertaken in the name of extraordinary national security needs. Yesterday, in his first Washington press conference since Feb. 15, he put as much distance as possible between himself and Watergate, in response to newsmen's questions.

Despite prodding by newsmen, Rogers left open the increasingly recurring question of his own tenure as Secretary of State, which has been nourished by intensified speculation that presidential security adviser Henry A. Kissinger soon may be named to succeed him.

"However the President wants to run his foreign affairs and whom he wants to assign to certain tasks is up to him," said Rogers blandly.

He pronounced himself "very happy to have played the part I have played," in the administration's "most successful" foreign policy. All Rogers would say about his future was to refer reporters back to a statement made through his spokesman on Aug. 7 on two posts Rogers would "never" consider: a seat on the Supreme Court, or an ambassadorial appointment to Moscow, where the United States has been without an ambassador since January, or anywhere else.

Rogers, who served as Attorney General in the Eisenhower administration, prides himself on the fact that the State Department has escaped any direct involvement in the Watergate scandals.

Although President Nixon has said that national security requirements during the first years of his administration were "so grave as to require extraordinary actions," Rogers was able to avoid, until yesterday, public comment on his own view of the security needs. Rogers did not disagree with the President's assessment, but his emphasis differed considerably.

He said yesterday that he would "hesitate" to "get into generalities and legal

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and serious to justify the burglary of (Daniel) Ellsberg's psychiatrist's office, the answer is no, I don't think so."

He was referring to the burglary at the office of the psychiatrist for Daniel Ellsberg, defendant in the Pentagon papers leak case. That break-in was directed by J. Howard Hunt and G. Gordon Liddy while working for the White House group known as the "plumbers" to investigate news leaks.

Hunt and Liddy also supervised the 1972 break-in at Watergate when they shifted over to work for the Committee for the Re-election of the President.

"I don't want to get into the whole Watergate subject," Rogers said yesterday.

As the day, though, he continued that he believes that "it is very important for the United States not to become so obsessed with security mat-

tered items as Secretary of State—and I know how the President feels about this—it is very discouraging when you are in the middle of very sensitive negotiations to have things leaked from the government, papers stolen and made public in a way which we believe the government believes can adversely affect our security interests."

"Now where to draw the line is a very difficult ques-

tion to answer. But generally speaking, I lean toward strict observance of legal requirements and only support a variance from that in very unusual circumstances."

Rogers said that as Attorney General, "I approved of wiretaps in a certain limited number of cases. All of those were reported to Congress. Congress was fully apprised of those."

Telephone tapping in national security cases, said Rogers, "has been done by every President since Franklin D. Roosevelt." And there has always been a question about its legality. But he said he took the view as other attorneys general did, that the President had that power.

Rogers said "I am not going to answer" the question of the consequence of the Watergate scandals.

President Nixon, last Wednesday night, told the nation that "confidence at home and abroad in our economy, our currency and our foreign policy is being sapped by uncertainty."

Rogers, however, said, "I have not noticed any discernible effects on our foreign policy up to the present time," in traveling around the world in the past three months. He said "I am sure" what the President had reference to, is that if uncertainty continues, if there is a feeling on the part

of other nations that we will not have sufficient support from the American people or from the Congress of the United States, that it could adversely affect our foreign policy and our foreign affairs."

"Up to the present time" that has not happened, said Rogers, but "the President is certainly correct that if we are overly obsessed with the matters of Watergate, it could have adverse effects."

On other subjects, Rogers said he was unaware of the "dual reporting system" on the clandestine F-52 bombing in Cambodia from March, 1969 to April, 1970.

comparatively optimistic view of the situation in Indochina.

"I am encourage, personally," said Rogers, "by the belief that the North Vietnamese have decided not to make major military efforts in South Vietnam."

North Vietnam, however, has yet to comply with all the terms of the Jan. 27 cease-fire agreement, including "an obligation to withdraw" its troops from Laos and Cambodia, he said.

"We have said to the North Vietnamese," said Rogers, "that we are not about to come to any final agreement with them on assistance for (postwar) reconstruction and rehabilitation until the Paris peace agreements are implemented fully, and that hasn't occurred yet."

Rogers officially announced that Iran has agreed to replace Canada on the international control commission established by the Vietnam cease-fire accord, if other nations involved consent. Although Canada pulled out of the commission despairing of any hope for effectively enforcing the cease-fire, Rogers said it is important to have the work continue.

ing U.S. troops in Western Europe.

• There is "growing awareness" that the situation in the Middle East is "unstable and could be dangerous" with only the existing Arab-Israeli cease-fire. Blowing up planes and machine-gunning diplomats is "idiotic" and "somewhere along the line the voice of reason" must begin to produce a settlement, but Rogers offered no sign of specific encouragement.