

Rodino's Panel Intensifies Inquiry on 'Security' Taps

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WASHINGTON, June 4—The House Judiciary Committee has quietly intensified its inquiry into 17 so-called "national security" wiretaps authorized by President Nixon beginning in 1969, court records showed today.

A series of letters filed in connection with a lawsuit brought by Morton H. Halperin, one of the wiretap victims, disclosed that committee leaders completed arrangements last week for the turnover of highly classified Federal Bureau of Investigation wiretap documents and materials.

John M. Doar, special counsel of the committee, told newsmen this morning that the legislators would begin hearing evidence Thursday on "domestic surveillance"—an area that would include the wiretaps.

With its access to all of the relevant documents, the House members may finally determine why the electronic surveillance, which began after the first published reports of the secret B-52 bombing of Cambodia in 1969, was expanded to include at least two White House employees who had no access to national security material.

The scope of the House inquiry was described by Representative Peter W. Rodino Jr., chairman of the Judiciary Committee, in a letter to the F.B.I. director, Clarence M. Kelley. It was one of three letters made public.

"In the area of the 1969 'June' wiretaps," Mr. Rodino wrote, "it is necessary for the staff to be able to report to the Judiciary Committee the

Continued on Page 30, Column 5

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Continued From Page 1, Col. 3

facts concerning the basis for the wiretaps, the nature of the material transmitted to the President, Dr. Kissinger, Mr. [H. R.] Haldeman and Mr. [John D.] Ehrlichman, and the F.B.I.'s investigation into the removal of the logs and files from the F.B.I. and the retention of those files and logs in the White House."

Henry Kissinger is Secretary of State and Mr. Haldeman and Mr. Ehrlichman are former Presidential assistants.

Mr. Rodino's letter suggested that President Nixon may have been personally involved in the July, 1971, decision to transfer the wiretaps logs and files from the F.B.I. to Mr. Ehrlichman's office, where they were found during the Watergate inquiries last spring.

Copies Ordered

The White House confirmed last May that Mr. Nixon had authorized the wiretaps. "It was a national security matter," a spokesman said at the time.

Among the 13 Government officials and four newsmen tapped were six members of the National Security Council, including Mr. Halperin, whose telephone was bugged until early 1971. In a civil suit filed last June, he contended that the wiretap placed on his home telephone was unconstitutional and illegal under the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968.

Earlier this year a federal judge ordered the Justice Department to provide Mr. Halperin and his attorneys with copies of his wiretap logs and other documents under seal for use in their suit.

The relevant documents—but not the logs themselves—were also supplied to Mr. Rodino's committee, as well as more than 150 other documents specifically requested by the committee staff. Mr. Rodino and Mr. Doar, after objections from the Justice Department, agreed to delete any names or other identifying markings before turning over the materials for perusal by the 38 committee members.

The committee officials agreed to the unusual security precaution after Laurence H. Silberman, Deputy Attorney General, warned them in a letter that, among other things, "making these documents public could result in substantial physical danger to at least some of the individuals involved." Mr. Silberman did not explain the comment.

The Justice Department official also expressed concern about the possibility of the committee's inadvertent disclosure of "national security" information and possible impairment "to the rights of individuals" who were wiretapped.

One attorney close to the case, told today of the concern for constitutional rights expressed by Mr. Silberman, laughed, "While Mort and his children were calling up their grandparents in Boston, they were listening," he said.

The Knight newspapers reported two weeks ago that the wiretap issue was discussed by President Nixon on Feb. 28, 1973, shortly after the first published reports of the existence of wiretaps on newsmen.

Mr. Nixon, in a discussion that was not included in the edited White House transcripts,

reportedly told John W. Dean 3d, then his counsel, that Mr. Kissinger had asked that the wiretaps be placed.

"I know that he asked that it be done," the President was quoted as saying. "And I assumed it was."

He was also quoted as complaining that the wiretaps "never helped us." Just gobs and gobs of material; gossip . . . The tapping was[a] very, very unproductive thing."

Kissinger Action Reported

The New York Times reported last May 17 that Mr. Kissinger provided the F.B.I. with the names of a number of his aides on the National Security whom he wanted wiretapped. Six members, including Helmut Sonnenfeldt and Winston Lord, still close Kissinger associates, were among those tapped.

In subsequent testimony last September before the Senate

Foreign Relations Committee, then considering his nomination to be Secretary of State, Mr. Kissinger minimized his wiretapping role.

"I never recommended the practice," he said. "I was aware of it and I went along with it to the extent of supplying the names of the people who had access to the sensitive documents in question."

Despite some newspaper reports," he added, "I never recommended it, urged it, or took it anywhere."

Sources with access to the wiretap documents declared, however, that Mr. Kissinger supplied the specific names of those whom he wanted placed under surveillance, and not merely those with certain security clearances, as he testified.

"He had a more active role than that," one source said. "He was very careful in what he said at the hearing."