

SALT 'Letter' Can't Be Found

By Robert G. Kaiser

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Former Defense Secretary James R. Schlesinger said yesterday that he does not remember writing, and cannot now locate, a letter to Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger, which a House committee has cited in accusing Kissinger of contempt of Congress.

The letter allegedly describes Soviet violations of the first treaty resulting from the strategic arms limitation talks (SALT). "I do not recall any such letter," Schlesinger said yesterday on Meet the Press (NBC, WRC).

Schlesinger, dismissed in President Ford's recent Cabinet reshuffle, said he had asked aides to look for the document, and they reported that "there is no such letter."

Asked if the House committee was unjustly accusing Kissinger, Schlesinger said that in regard to this letter at least, the accusation against his former bureaucratic rival "is not an accurate charge."

On Nov. 14 the House intelligence committee, chaired by Rep. Otis G. Pike (D-N.Y.), cited Kissinger for contempt because the secretary refused to produce three sets of documents: those related to alleged Soviet violations of the SALT agreement, particularly the letter attributed to Schlesinger; documents on covert activities approved since 1965 by the "40 Committee," an executive group that oversees covert actions; and State Department documents on covert activities abroad in the 1962-72 period.

An article in The Washington Post on Nov. 15 written by Myron S. Waldman of Newsday cited what was called a letter from Schlesinger describing alleged Soviet violations of the SALT agreement. The gist of the purported letter was that the Russians were disguising

their arms programs in possible violation of the agreement, and that Schlesinger wanted to discuss this situation with the full National Security Council.

Reporter Waldman attributed his account to "sources outside the intelligence community who saw the letter" from Schlesinger.

Asked if he thought the Soviet Union had violated the first SALT agreement, Schlesinger said yesterday that the the Soviets had "failed to meet our expectations" in a number of respects. He said he would have preferred to see the U.S. government protest Soviet behavior more quickly and more strongly than it did. But he did not accuse the Soviet Union of directly violating the terms of the agreement.

More generally, the former secretary said he thought "the Soviet Union is in a position in which it has the initiative" in international affairs. He repeated his oft-expressed warning that the United States must keep up its guard and expand defense programs to meet the Soviet threat he perceives.