ford Ad

HENRY A. KISSINGER HENRY TASCA

... the secretary denied the ambassador's appeal

U.S. 'Knew' of Plan To Invade Cyprus

By Joe Alex Morris
Los Angeles Times

ATHENS, Nov. 21 — U.S. Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger not only knew that the Turks planned to invade Cyprus in July, sources here say, he also rejected a last-minute appeal to use the 6th Fleet to block them.

The appeal came from Henry J. Tasca, then the U.S. ambassador in Athens. Unimpeachable sources here with intimate connections to the upper echelons of the Greek political-military and the American establishments, say that Kissinger angrily told Tasca off for making such a suggestion.

The 6th Fleet was in the vicinity, but did nothing as the Turkish invasion fleet moved across the 50-mile channel separating Cyprus from the Turkish mainland. Later, when the Greeks decided to take military action on their own, Kissinger's special emissary persuaded them not to, pledging that the United States would get the Turks out of Cyprus.

These and other fragments of the Cyprus tragedy and the U.S. role in the overthrow of the Greek military junta suggest that planners in Washington thought they could kill two birds with one stone: Makarios' Mediterranean neutralism and a fanatical junta in Athens.

What the Americans apparently did not anticipate was that the Turks would seize 40 per cent of Cyprus, making one in every three Greek Cypriots homeless and creating a new situation on the island.

A former Cabinet minister to Cyprus deposed president, Archbishop Makarios, said: "The Americans told me they had expected a Turkish landing, but only a limited one. It got out of hand."

But at that time, as the crisis that followed the Greek junta's coup against Makarios was coming to a head, the United States was assuring Greece that the Turkish military buildup across the straits from Cyprus was pure show. Twice before the Turks had

See CYPRUS, A20, Col. 1

CYPRUS, From A1

threatened to invade Cyprus, and each time heavy American pressure had stopped them.

There was no evidence of such pressure this time. The United States sent Under Secretary of State Joseph J. Sisco into the area, but apparently without a mandate to pressure people.

Exactly what happened in those tense days is still hard to learn: The U.S. embassy has maintained its tight-lipped policy since Tasca's departure.

Gen. Dimitrios Ioannides, the leader of the military junta, is equally uninformative. "One day my voice will be heard," he said recently," but not yet."

Almost the only person ready to talk freely about the events was not even a direct participant.

George Alfantakis, a right-wing lawyer who is representing Ioannides and other former junta officers in court actions over their alleged misdeeds while in power, says that Sisco persuaded the Greek generals not to take military counteraction against the Turks. Alfantakis says that Sisco promised Lt. Gen. Grigorios Bonanos, the Greek chief of staff, that the United States would force the Turks back out of Cyprus on the day

after the first, limited Turkish operation there.

How does Alfantakis know? "The statement is based on information from my clients," he says. "They cannot speak publicly, but I can."

Alfantakis has sent the Greek press statements detailing his information. The newspapers have been ordered not to touch it, because of national security.

Mario Modiano, one of the best-informed Greek journalists, goes even further. Sisco, he maintains, "assured the Greeks that the Turks would not invade."

None of this is proof that the Americans double-crossed the Greek junta. It could be construed equally as a Turkish double-cross of the Americans.

According to Alfantakis Greece was ready to launch a military action once the Turkish force actually landed on Cyprus. It was to be a limited action, short of a declaration of war.

Greece had two submarines off Cyprus, and six Phantom jets on Crete ready to go into action. Greek artillery was also to open up across the Turkish border in Thrace.

This was Saturday, July 20, the day of the first Turkish landings on Cyprus. The junta, its prime minister, Adamantios Androutspoulos, and the general staff agreed to launch what they thought of as a pre-emptive strike, a warning to the Turks to keep their hands off Cyprus. It could easily have escalated into full-scale war.

Then the generals betrayed their superiors Alfantakis says. An intelligence report came in, allegedly from U.S. and British sources and via NATO headquarters in Brussels, stating that the Bulgarians were massing in Thrace.

Without bothering to check the accuracy of the report, which could have been accomplished in a matter of minutes, the general staff withdrew the two marines and flew the six Phantoms to northern Greece. The threat of a Mediterranean war subsided.

Through a trick, the generals outmaneuvered Ioannides, the junta and the officers who supported their war-like policy. Ioannides had called for a limited mobilization, but the generals declared a full mobilization.

The result was chaos. Every unit of transportation, including army trucks, was pressed into service to rush reservists back to their units. The roads, railroads and airports were hopelessly clogged; important units supporting the junta were sent north to the front.

The key man in frustrating the junta appears to have been Adm. Peter Arapakis, commander of the navy. It was apparently Arapakis who informed Sisco, through Tasca, of Greek plans to attack the Turks. It was Arapakis who knew of Sisco's pledge before Gen. Bonanos, the chief of staff, that the United States would get the Turks out of Cyprus.

Later Arapakis was to play a role in the return of Constantine Karamanlis from exile to take the reins from the fallen junta.

On Tuesday, July 23, President Phaedon Gizikis called in the old politicians to decide what to do next.

Evanghelos Averoff proposed that the new leader had to be one of two conservative leaders: either Karamanlis or Panayotis Canellopoulos. Karamanlis had spent the dictatorship in exile, while Canellopoulos had stayed behind to fight.

Canellopoulos was chosen, largely at the urging of the generals, who said there was no time to waste—Karamanlis was in Paris. Cancellopoulos agreed, but on the condition that the old Center Union forces under George Mavros agree to join in the effort. Shortly thereafter, Mavros agreed.

Neither man knew it, but the situation had already changed: Averoff and Arapakis had in the meantime convinced the flustered generals that it had to be Karamanlis.

Ambassador Tasca called that afternoon at the palace, where the generals and the old politicans were huddling; but it is not clear whether this helped charge Averoff's position. At the same time, Arapakis told Sisco that the junta was dead, and he, the admiral, spoke for the generals.

Like Ioannides, Arapakis won't comment; but now that Greece has an elected government again, the details of those dramatic days in July seem certain to emerge slowly.

By any standard, with the one great exception of the restoration of democracy in Greece, the strategic situation in the eastern Mediterranean has worsened. Cyprus is torn in two, and perhaps a third of its people are regugees. Anti-American resentment is near universal in Greece, and even Karamanlis—with a resounding electoral triumph behind him—will not be able to run against it. Turkish politics have degenerated into a hopeless muddle without strong leadership.

The operation boosted the popularity of then-Turkish premier Bulent Ecevit, a left-wing intellectual, enormously. The current mudle in Ankara is caused largely by other parties' fear of premature elections, which might well return Ecevit to power with an absolute majority in the Turkish Parliament.

It is unlikely that the United States planned it all to work out this way.