

No Role in Firing, Kissinger Says

By Marilyn Berger
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Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger said yesterday that he was informed — but not consulted — about President Ford's top-level personnel changes and declined to say whether he had considered resigning because of the shake-up.

Meeting with reporters for the first time since he was removed as Mr. Ford's national security adviser and since Defense Secretary James R. Schlesinger was fired, Kissinger appeared chastened — "everybody has learned, including myself, from recent events," he said — and combined confidence with uncertainty about his future.

Asked whether he expected to last out President Ford's term, Kissinger replied sardonically: "Well, I don't answer my telephone on Sundays." The reference was to the White House's Sunday telephone call to Schlesinger summoning him to a meeting, where he was told he was fired.

It was when he was asked whether he was consulted on the shake-up, particularly as to its effect on his timing of foreign policy actions, and whether he had considered

resigning that Kissinger said: "I was informed about the change."

He added: "I cannot comment every two weeks about stories about my resignation." He said he did not believe the personnel changes would affect the conduct of American foreign policy.

Kissinger acknowledged that he would lose the chairmanship of several National Security Council committees as a result of his removal from the job of national security adviser. But, he said, "committees do not determine policy and the chairmanships of committees do not determine, necessarily, influence."

In the past, Kissinger has made it clear that proximity to the President, which the office in the White House afforded him, was an important asset for him.

"I am confident that I have sufficient access to the President that my views are heard," he said yesterday. "That is all a Cabinet member has a right to ask for." Kissinger also said he would have "some special

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relationship" with the Verification Panel that deals with strategic arms limitations and with the special action group that deals with crises. (SEE & NOW)

Kissinger conceded that there had been differences between Schlesinger and himself — some involving the strategic arms limitations negotiations and some involving personality disputes, "which neither of us handled with the elegance and wisdom

that perhaps was necessary."

He paid high tribute to Schlesinger, whom he called "a man of outstanding ability and one of the best analysts of defense matters." Kissinger denied that he had ever told President Ford or anyone else that he would have to choose between them. Asked why, if he thought so highly of him, Schlesinger was removed from office, Kissinger replied:

"He was not let go by me so this is a question you must address elsewhere."

Kissinger seemed momentarily speechless when he was asked what qualifications Donald Rumsfeld brought to the job of Secretary of Defense, other than being a former naval aviator as Mr. Ford had mentioned. Kissinger paused for a long moment, clearly suppressing laughter at the question.

"We haven't had a brawl in this town for all of three days," he said finally. Then, pulling himself together he

said he had known Rumsfeld for many years. "He is very well attuned to the political process," he said, "very intelligent, very concerned with issues of national security."

Kissinger added: "I think he will do a good job as Secretary of Defense. I intend to cooperate closely with him."

He said he hoped some of the differences that existed between the State and Defense departments "can be eased and that everybody has learned, including myself, from recent events."