

# A Reminder of the McCarthy Era



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THE NEW YORK TIMES charged this week that "a top official at the White House" had asked reporters "Not to embarrass the government by printing the details" of weekend U.S. air raids over North Vietnam.

The allegation was made by James Reston, the distinguished Times columnist in a story that likened the "anti-Communist, anti-intellectual, anti-university, anti-newspaper" atmosphere in Washington to the days of the late Senator Joseph McCarthy.

The charge is particularly serious in view of the Nixon Administration's avowed determination to avoid the "credibility gap" which plagued the Johnson Administration on the Vietnam issue.

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CONTACTED by this column, Reston refused to name the White House official who had tried to manage the news. "You may ask," said Reston, "but I'm not going to tell you."

Max Frankel, chief of the Times' Washington bureau, also refused to talk about the incident. "I just don't want to discuss it," he said.

Nevertheless, this column has learned that the official was Henry Kissinger, President Nixon's top foreign policy advisor, who talked to Frankel about the air raids.

Kissinger said it was "absolutely untrue" that he had asked the Times not to print the details of the raids to spare the government embarrassment. He gave this account of his conversations with Frankel and Reston:

Frankel called Kissinger several times

after Hanoi announced that American planes had bombed parts of North Vietnam. Frankel said he had the story on good authority but wanted to know how many U.S. planes were involved.

"I said I didn't want to get into numbers," Kissinger recalled. He also mentioned national security.

"Frankel shot back: "Then you don't deny it."

"I'm not confirming it nor denying it," Kissinger said. "I think you should go to the Pentagon for this."

"I specifically told Frankel that I would use my influence with the Pentagon to help him get the facts," Kissinger said. "The last thing that was in our minds was to keep this secret."

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CONCERNING his conversation with Reston, Kissinger said he had been trying to get in touch with the Times columnist for much of the day to discuss a pending luncheon engagement.

When Reston finally returned the call, according to Kissinger, it wasn't in anger as Reston had said, but the conversation was "jocular."

During this conversation, Kissinger said Reston mentioned in passing: "What's this about knocking off the story?"

Kissinger explained his silence about the air raids.

Footnote: Kissinger quoted liberally from a stenographic record of his conversations. He said he always has a secretary listening on an extension when he talks to reporters, and a record is made of the conversations.