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Contends White House leaked only fragments

WASHINGTON — The planners in the White House basement, who howled in pain over our disclosure of their India-Pakistan secrets, have slipped fragments from the same secret documents to their friends in the press.

This illustrates how the White House

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uses official secrecy to control the flow of news to the public. Favorable facts are leaked out; unfavorable news is suppressed.

The official leakers are now spreading the word that President Nixon's pro-Pakistan policy was not the disaster it appeared but really saved West Pakistan from dismemberment.

As evidence, the boys in the basement leaked a few selective secrets to our column-writing colleague, Joseph Alsop, who has excellent contacts at the highest levels of government.

Alsop stated (The States-Item, Jan. 17) "on positive authority" that the U.S. government had "conclusive proof" of India's intention to crush the main body of the Pakistan army in West Pakistan. This positive proof, he wrote, was "the centerpiece of every one of the CIA's daily reports to the White House during the crisis period."

We have read the CIA's daily reports to the White House during the India-Pakistan war. They are stamped "Top Secret Umbra," a designation reserved for the darkest of the CIA's secrets.

Alsop's 'proof'

Alsop told us he never read the CIA reports himself. He had no way of knowing, therefore, that his sources gave him only part of the story.

These CIA digests, true enough, raised the possibility of an Indian attempt to crush West Pakistan. But the same digests also suggested India would accept an early cease-fire.

Here is a typical excerpt: "There have been reports that (Indian Prime Minister) Gandhi would accept a cease-fire and international mediation as soon as East Bengal had been liberated . . . On the other hand, we have had several recent reports that India now intends not only to liberate East Bengal but also to straighten its borders in Kashmir and to destroy West Pakistan's air and armored forces."

The strongest CIA warning was sent to the White House on Dec. 10. "According to a source who has access to information on activities in Prime Minister Gandhi's office," declared the report, "as soon as the situation in East Pakistan is settled, Indian forces will launch a major offensive against

West Pakistan." But the CIA also took note of repeated Indian assurances to American Ambassador Ken Keating that India had no territorial ambitions and wished only to end the conflict with the least possible bloodshed.

Dubious 'proof'

It is clear from the secret documents in our possession that the CIA had no "conclusive proof" of an Indian plan to dismember West Pakistan. The CIA had received a number of reports that a major Indian offensive might be imminent on the western front. But these were discounted by both the State and Defense Departments.

Only Henry Kissinger, the President's foreign policy czar, seemed eager to believe the worst.

Alsop's sources also told him that President Nixon intervened with the Kremlin, threatening "an ugly showdown," to stop Mrs. Gandhi's army from carving up West Pakistan.

In response, Alsop claims that the Kremlin hurriedly dispatched Deputy Foreign Minister Vasily Kuznestsov to New Delhi on Dec. 12 to tell Mrs. Gandhi not to attack West Pakistan.

The secret CIA report on his mission, however, doesn't mention any ultimatum against attacking West Pakistan.

"Vasily Kuznestsov arrived in India on 12 December to discuss the political recognition of Bangladesh by the Soviet Union . . ." according to the CIA. "Kuznestsov has told Indian officials that the Soviet Union is not prepared to recognize Bangladesh until Dacca falls and until the Indian army successfully liberates Bangladesh from Pakistani forces."

The question of an Indian offensive against West Pakistan was brought up the next day by Soviet Ambassador Nikolai Pegov. Reported the CIA:

"Pegov pointed out that India has achieved a marvelous military victory. Pakistan is no longer a military force, and it is therefore unnecessary for India to launch an offensive into West Pakistan to crush a military machine that no longer exists.

"If India should decide to take Kashmir, Pegov added, the Soviet Union would not interfere, but India would have to accomplish this objective within the shortest possible time."

Joseph Alsop is an enterprising and conscientious columnist. He acknowledged to us that "it is possible to be lied to on the very highest level." But he assured us his source had "never lied before."

The evidence in our possession, however, suggests that the White House is playing peek-aboo with CIA secrets to distort the truth.