

Kissinger Hearings Will Also Be Test For Interrogators

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Henry A. Kissinger's confirmation hearing to be Secretary of State, which opens today in the Senate Caucus Room, will be a test for the interrogators as well as for the nominee.

For four years the Senate Foreign Relations Committee has complained despairingly that it has been shut out of the shaping of foreign policy by the Nixon administration. It was limited to questioning Secretary of State William P. Rogers and his subordinates, while Kissinger conducted the basic strategy in the White House as the President's super-powerful national security adviser.

Although the committee has met informally with Kissinger at the home of chairman J. W. Fulbright (D-Ark.), or in a Senate meeting room, on an unofficial courtesy basis, today's hearing will mark the first formal questioning of Kissinger by a congressional committee.

In theory at least, the hearing provides an opportunity for Congress, through the Fulbright committee, to demonstrate the resurgent mood of an increasingly independent-minded Congress to reassert its prerogatives in the conduct of international affairs.

Pending legislation to curb the President's war-making powers, and the Aug. 15 legislative cutoff of all American combat operations in Indochina—imposed over President Nixon's bitter opposition—are examples of the congressional intent.

On the eve of Kissinger's appearance before the committee, nevertheless, there was no sign on Capitol Hill that any tense confrontation is in prospect, despite the fact that the hearing will open in the temporarily vacated setting for the Watergate inquiry.

"The reality is," said one Senate source, "that the Senate Foreign Relations Committee would much prefer to cooperate with Kissinger, and have some voice in the making of policy, than to fight with him."

Despite the committee's years of battle with the Johnson and Nixon administrations over the Indochina war, its members are not by nature fiercely combative or even sharply inquisitive. Committee members, who include both the Democratic and Republican leaders of the Senate, never have been noted for exhaustive, persistent or even comprehensive probing of most foreign policy subjects.

In addition, most members of the committee are personal friends of Kissinger, and admirers of his articulateness. "Nobody wants to play 'dog in the manger' and hold up his confirmation," said one source.

Committee sources said "a thick stack of questions" for Kissinger has been distributed to committee members. They include questions about Kissinger's role in the wiretapping of 17 officials, including members of his National Security Council staff. This is expected to be the most personally sensitive subject for Kissinger in his confirmation.

At the request of two committee members, it was learned, the committee staff asked the Justice Department and the Federal Bureau of Investigation to supply it with FBI reports that would detail Kissinger's participation in the wiretapping authorized by the White House. The response from the Justice department, it was said yesterday, was "a gracious no." That issue is expected to be pursued in the hearing.

In a statement yesterday, Sen. George McGovern (D-S.D.), one of the committee's newer members, said that while he has "an extremely high regard for Henry Kissinger's ability, no one should assume that the Senate Foreign Relations Committee will rubber-stamp his nomination to be Secretary of State."

McGovern said Kissinger should outline "what he believes are the proper boundaries for the Executive Branch in keeping secrets from the Congress and the American people." The senator said he especially wants to learn Kissinger's views "about the procedures used to maintain the secret bombing of Cambodia for 14 months in 1969 and 1970."

Sen. Harold Hughes (D-Iowa), although not a committee member, has said he may seek to block Senate confirmation of Kissinger's nomination until the Pentagon produces a "white paper" on the secret air war in Cambodia. Deputy Defense Secretary William Clements said he regrets that the Defense Department has "not yet completed a satisfactory paper."

A major issue in the Kissinger hearing, beyond specific issues of foreign policy, is how he will operate with "two hats." For, in addition to serving as Secretary of State, Kissinger will continue to operate as the President's national security adviser—an unprecedented combination of posts.

Kissinger has deferred until the hearing his plans for operating in the dual posts, but he has said he will divide his time between the White House and the State Department.

As director of the NSC staff, which has 120 employees including secretarial staff, Kissinger has wide interdepartmental powers. Among other functions, he directs the top intelligence coordinating committee on clandestine activities, known as the "Forty Committee," and the highest committee on nuclear arms negotiations.

His NSC post alone puts Kissinger in control of far more power than the entire State Department commands.

Although many accounts of Kissinger's nomination to be Secretary of State raised questions about how his highly secretive operating style will function in the "vast bureaucracy" of State, the State Department is actually one of the smallest in the government.