

Kissinger Denies PW Wife's Claim

WASHINGTON — (AP) — The wife of an American prisoner of war says White House adviser Henry Kissinger told her and others that President Nixon's trip to mainland China could speed up a negotiated end to the Vietnam war.

Kissinger denied the statement, attributed to him by Barbara Mullen, of Oakland,

wife of a Marine pilot missing in action in Laos.

Mrs. Mullen said this and other statements intimating a break in the deadlocked negotiations were made by Kissinger in meetings — most recently on Aug. 23 at San Clemente with relatives of Americans who are prisoners of war or missing in action.

"He said the North Vietnamese are not too happy about" Nixon's projected trip to mainland China, Mrs. Mullen said in an interview. "So they will feel they should begin to negotiate more seriously with us now."

Mrs. Mullen said Kissinger referred to a thaw in U.S.-Soviet relations as another pressure on Hanoi to negotiate.

"I didn't say it. It isn't true. And it is not our policy," Kissinger said when asked about the report.

Kissinger, Nixon's adviser on international security matters, has been meeting bimonthly with the families since February, usually in conjunction with broad meetings of the National League of Families of American Prisoners and Missing in Southeast Asia.

"These are terribly emotional meetings for them and they cling to every straw," Kissinger said in an interview.

"I certainly could not under any circumstances have said our meetings with Peking would help our negotiations with Hanoi," Kissinger said. "I could have said that if there is a general relaxation of tensions it would contribute to peace."

Earlier Comment

Mrs. Mullen's statements reflected a comment made earlier by Louise M. Mulligan, of Virginia Beach, Va., wife of a Navy flier captive in North Vietnam, at the league's annual meeting here this week.

"The administration would like us to believe something is imminent," Mrs. Mulligan said in part of a statement read at a news conference Tuesday. "In fact, Dr. Kissinger has been intimating this at private meetings with the families since last February."

Mrs. Mulligan, who did not attend the August meeting, said later in an interview that she recalled no specific promises made at any of the sessions at which she was present.

"But practically every family member that walks out of these meetings comes away with the feeling that something is imminent," Mrs. Mulligan said, "that they are really doing something but can't tell us what it is."

"I have never said that something is imminent," Kissinger said. "I have said we are doing the best we can."

Nixon Visit

In a surprise visit to the league's banquet Tuesday night, Nixon said he is pursuing every possible lead for returning the prisoners, "including many private chan-

nels that cannot be disclosed."

Kissinger said Nixon's reference to "private channels" had nothing to do with any "intimations" of secret progress claimed by the women.

Mrs. Mullen said Kissinger prefaced his comments at the Aug. 26 meeting by saying it would "be cruel to offer you hope that anything is going to happen soon."

"Then he said things are happening which are going to make meaningful negotiations more imminent in Paris," she said.

"He said North Vietnam is going to feel they really need to negotiate."

Kissinger flatly denied making any claims for the China trip other than the possibility of general relaxation in tensions.

Possibility

Kissinger said he may have referred to a thaw in U.S.-Soviet relations "only in the general context that if there are improved prospects for peace in the world generally, this could improve the chances for peace in Southeast Asia, but not in any sense of making any special deals for any country."

"But if you take these individual statements out of context," he said, "they are just totally misleading."

"We are not trying to fool these ladies," Kissinger said. "I am seeing these ladies because of my deep feeling for what they are suffering, and I don't use them for a foreign-policy statement."