

SFChronicle MAR 1 1977

Carter's Reaction to The Post's CIA Story

Washington

White House press secretary Jody Powell said yesterday that the Washington Post displayed a "very responsible attitude" in its dealings with the White House before the newspaper's decision to publish a story about secret CIA payments to Jordan's King Hussein.

At his regular news briefing Powell refused to characterize President Carter's reaction to publication of the story. He said Carter prefers to keep his feelings on the matter "private."

Powell was questioned about the issue because of an Associated Press story during the weekend that said the President had told a group of congressional leaders that the Post was "irresponsible" to publish the story February 18 and that he had sought to discourage the paper from printing it.

The Post story reported that for more than 20 years the CIA made secret annual payments that

totaled millions of dollars to Hussein, a long-standing U.S. ally in the Middle East.

Carter was unaware of the payments before taking office and ordered them halted when he learned of them, according to the story. Powell yesterday described a series of telephone conversations between White House and Post officials that culminated in a meeting in the Oval Office of Carter, reporter Bob Woodward and Post executive editor Benjamin C. Bradlee on February 16.

Powell said officials of the newspaper had asked if the White House had information "that they should know about" in connection with a decision to publish the story and had "made a good-faith effort" to obtain such information.

Powell said that during the meeting Carter left "no doubt" that he preferred that the story not be published.

Washington Post