

Kissinger Says He Did Not Request the Use of Wiretaps

By Laurence Stern

Washington Post Staff Writer

Henry Kissinger said yesterday he did not specifically request the use of wiretaps in 1969 to shut off news leaks but acknowledged that he supplied the FBI with the names of White House staff members with access to classified information.

"I would consider wiretapping in general a distasteful thing," said the President's national security adviser. "I considered the situation, as it existed, a very dangerous

Kissinger was confronted with the politically harrowing issue of the White House wiretaps during a briefing on President Nixon's trip to Iceland.

He said he considered the whole episode "a painful matter" but that he has given no thought to resigning, as has been rumored in recent news stories. As to his personal credibility, said Kissinger, it is "for others to judge, not for me."

The incident — involving wiretaps on 13 government officials and four newspapers is known to have

caused some anguish to Kissinger. He has made both angry and plaintive calls to newspaper offices stressing his personal non-involvement with the Watergate scandal and recent revelations of White House implication in the case. One Washington columnist declined to attend a weekend party in Kissinger's honor on grounds that his phone was tapped in the White House security operation.

Kissinger insisted yesterday he did not provide to the FBI the names of the journalists whose phones

were tapped by the government. He said he did not know how they were selected for surveillance.

He maintained that the role of his office in the wiretapping episode was "substantially" to supply the names of those in the administration who had access to "the information that was being investigated."

Kissinger cited the same national security grounds mentioned by President Nixon last Tuesday as the basis for the taps.

"Our foreign policy has depended to a considerable extent on the fact that foreign governments who were dealing with us could have confidence that their communications would remain confidential," he said.

"Many of our initiatives were conducted on this confidential basis, and most of the successes of this administration depended on negotiations that were conducted preliminarily in a secret way," Kissinger asserted.

But Kissinger said the "particular methods" chosen

by the administration to plug the leaks, namely wiretapping, "was not within the jurisdiction of my office."

Like the President, Kissinger emphasized his concern over the possible damage done by the news leaks but dissociated himself from the specific counter-measures taken by some government officials to stop them.

"I certainly disapprove of burglaries in offices, yes," said the national security adviser. He claimed the 1969 wiretapping "should be separated from some of the

other activities that were going on. It was legal."

Unlike the President, however, Kissinger did not claim any significant internal security benefits from the taps. He has, in fact, previously said that the taps revealed nothing to implicate any of his own National Security Council staff members.

In his statement last Tuesday the President said the taps "provided important leads that made it possible to tighten the security of highly sensitive material."

Mr. Nixon said the wiretaps terminated in February, 1971, before the Pentagon Papers leak in June and a leak on the strategic arms talks in July which Kissinger yesterday described as "extremely dangerous."

Asked, in retrospect, whether the disputed news leaks caused any damage to national security, Kissinger replied: "That is very difficult to isolate."

He closed the briefing with the words, "I just don't want to discuss any more details about it."