

White House

Comment on
Tap Report

Washington

The White House maintained yesterday that any Secret Service wiretapping of the President's brother that may have occurred would have been related to protecting the President's family.

Responding to a report in the Washington Post that the Secret Service tapped businessman F. Donald Nixon's telephone for more than a year, according to four highly reliable sources, White House spokesman Gerald L. Warren said he had discussed the matter with the President.

"If there was any monitoring of the President's immediate family by the Secret Service, it would have been related to the protective

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function of the Secret Service," Warren said. "I'm not going to go beyond that."

And Warren didn't, despite repeated questioning at the White House daily briefing. At one point he even declined to say whether the President considered his brother a member of his immediate family and therefore eligible for Secret Service protection.

CHAIRMEN

Meanwhile, the chairmen of two congressional subcommittees requested a full explanation from the Secret Service.

Senator Joseph Montoya (Dem - N.M.) and Representative Tom Steed (Dem - Okla.), who head the Senate and House appropriations subcommittees responsible for the Secret Service, said they want to know how such wiretapping could fall within the agency's authorized activities.

"I think it despicable to wiretap anybody under the guise of security for the President," said Montoya,

who is also a member of the Senate Watergate committee. "This is most shocking because I didn't think the Secret Service was in the business of wiretapping."

The Post story, on which Warren said he would have no comment other than his brief statement, said that the President ordered his brother's phone tapped during his first term because of fears that Donald Nixon's financial activities might embarrass the Administration.

These activities included a \$205,000 loan that Donald Nixon received from billionaire Howard Hughes in 1956 and never repaid.

REQUEST

In a letter to Secret Service director James J. Rowley, Montoya requested "complete details" on Secret Service wiretapping and electronic surveillance activities, including the number of taps, the reason for each tap or other action, and the source of authority in each case.

"I hope you will agree with me that it is urgent for us to clear the air, either by refuting or justifying any Secret Service activity of this kind," Montoya said in the letter.

According to the sources quoted in the newspaper story, the wiretap on Donald Nixon was one of several conducted by the Secret Service on orders from the President or his aides.

Warren refused to discuss these other reported taps.

Washington Post