

Report Kissinger Thinks His Phone Was Tapped

Washington

Secretary of State Henry Kissinger has said privately that he is "virtually certain" his telephone was tapped at some point since he joined the Nixon administration in early 1969, according to a former White House associate.

Kissinger, who recently returned from a trip to China and the Middle East, reportedly made the remark shortly before he was confirmed as secretary of state in September.

When the associate, a former White House official, pressed Kissinger as to who he believed might have ordered such surveillance, the secretary replied, "At least now you know the plumbers don't work for me."

The reference was to a White House group called the "plumbers" because it was assigned to halt leaks of information.

Kissinger, the associate said, would not elaborate on the basis for his suspicions.

The secretary of state denied through a State Department spokesman last week that he had ever expressed

such a belief to anyone.

Told of Kissinger's "total" rejection of his account, the associate, who asked not to be identified, replied that he would stand behind his version of the conversation.

Deputy White House press secretary Gerald L. Warren, asked to comment on the report, replied that "we have no evidence whatsoever that Secretary Kissinger's phone has ever been tapped."

If Kissinger's reported belief is correct, it might mean that the efforts of the Nixon Administration in 1969 and 1970 to halt leaks of sensitive foreign policy information to the press extended far higher than previously has been realized. Kissinger was one of the three men who played a central role in the investigation of lesser government officials suspected of leaking such information.

Because Kissinger was closely associated with the FBI's wiretap operation, it is significant that he reportedly suspected the plumbers, the covert squad of White House operatives, of arranging his own surveill-

ance, if that, indeed, took place.

The plumbers, officially known as the Special Investigations Unit, were directed by John D. Ehrlichman, Mr. Nixon's former top domestic adviser.

Some of those familiar with the internal workings of the White House during the first Nixon Administration have suggested that, if Kissinger's alleged suspicions are correct, the decision to tap his telephone might not have been prompted by the news leaks, even though Kissinger, then the President's national security adviser, was close to a number of Washington newsmen.

One former White House aide speculated that if such surveillance occurred, it could have been a product of the rivalry with Kissinger that has been attributed to H.R. Haldeman, Mr. Nixon's former chief of staff.

Dr. Kissinger, the former aide noted, was one of the few men whose access to Mr. Nixon was not controlled by Haldeman. The former aide added that Haldeman and others high-

in White House circles sometimes expressed resentment at Kissinger's party-going life-style.

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