

Nixon Claim Of Security Is Disputed

The Infighting

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A secret diplomacy that reversed the main currents of United States foreign policy led to extraordinary struggles for information between the Pentagon and the White House during 1971.

The diplomacy, which embraced a wide range of initiatives including rapprochement with the Soviet Union and China as well as a break-through on strategic arms negotiations, was limited to the President, his national security affairs adviser, Henry A. Kissinger, and a few staff aides.

One high-ranking former official said the extraordinary intra-governmental secrecy precautions applied by Kissinger constituted "a war against the bureaucracy to a remarkable degree."

Another former national security policy-maker based in the White House said, "it was always the operating principle that important things were kept out of the National Security Council system completely." This excluded the military from virtually all access to the new diplomatic initiatives.

The atmosphere of privacy that enveloped the Nixon administration's foreign and national security policies extended to the State Department and the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, which was responsible for developing strategic arms policy.

"There was a strong feeling that the whole NSC mechanism was a shell game managed by Henry," said a former official.

Kissinger's advocates, on the other hand, argue that in order to achieve the Nixon administration's new objec-

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tives it was vital to operate secretly in order to shut out those in the bureaucracy who were committed to traditional Cold War doctrine.

It was in this context, according to informed officials, that the unauthorized transfer of National Security Council minutes and documents was carried out by Pentagon military representatives in the White House.

The material specifically included transcripts of deliberations by the NSC's Washington Special Action Group (WASAG) on the Indo-Pakistan war in December, 1971. But it included other sensitive records from the various NSC subcommittees over which Kissinger presided as special assistant for national security affairs.

In a new development yesterday the White House branded as "inaccurate" a Chicago Sun-Times report that Kissinger ordered a phone tapped in 1971 in the office of then-Secretary of Defense Melvin R. Laird.

Authoritative sources insisted yesterday that the report alludes to the previously announced tapping of the telephone of Lt. Gen. Robert E. Pursley, former senior military assistant to Laird. The Pursley tap was one of 17 FBI wiretaps ordered by the President after consultation with then Attorney General John N. Mitchell and with Kissinger. The list included 13 government officials and four newspapermen.

The Sun-Times also reported a wireless microphone was placed in the White House office of Wayne Smith, former NSC staff assistant to Kissinger. There were suspicions, the newspaper said, that the bugging was carried out by military officials.

Smith said yesterday the first word he had on the bug was the Sun-Times report. He said the thought never occurred to him that he might be a target for eaves-

dropping while he was in the government. But after the surfacing of the Watergate affair he acknowledged that he thought he might have been the target of eavesdropping. His office was a focal point for both strategic arms and Vietnam policy.

The year 1971 was a critical one for all the major lines of innovation in Nixon administration foreign policy.

On May 20, 1971, President Nixon and Soviet Party leader Leonid I. Brezhnev made a dramatic joint announcement that was to break the deadlock on the first stage of the strategic arms limitation agreement. Knowledgeable officials contend that Laird, Secretary of State William P. Rogers and Gerard Smith, chief of the SALT negotiating delegation, were kept in the dark until the eve of the public announcement.

"A lot of noses got out of joint on that one," said an authoritative source.

Kissinger's dealings with the Soviet Union on SALT were of critical concern to the Pentagon. U.S. strategic military policy toward the Soviet Union is an important determinant of the size of the Pentagon's budget, its missile force and its targeting program.

The Army's main role is to contain the Soviet Union in Europe. The Navy's is to keep open the Atlantic sea lanes. And the primary role of the Air Force is to maintain parity if not dominance in air space against the Soviet Union, the only world power with missile and bomber delivery systems capable of destroying the United States.

Under the circumstances, according to one former official, the military "was sur-

prisingly docile" in its dealings with the NSC. "I am not aware of what I would call a really bruising struggle . . . You could never have something like the Admiral's Revolt (of the post-World War II period) over the big bomber," he said.

Kissinger anticipated deep and organized opposition to his policies, a knowledgeable former official reported, but it never formed. "Much of the bitterness and bitchiness in the bureaucracy was based on the belief that it was a rigged game and that they would never know until the final moment what the game was," this former official said.

The President announced

his China trip in July, 1971, and his visit to the Soviet Union the following October. Foreign affairs strategists in the White House and State Department questioned the wisdom of announcing the trip to Moscow eight months in advance. Their reasoning was that it would give the Soviet Union enough time to put Mr. Nixon in a diplomatic bind because of the heavy pressure on him to conclude a deal in Moscow. There is a consensus within government that the analysts were right.

In January, 1971, the President also stunned the bureaucracy with his disclosure of Kissinger's secret diplomacy in Vietnam. The revelation of Kissinger's solo negotiations with the North Vietnamese was news even to many officials working on the negotiations.

One of the continuing enigmas in the strained relations between the Pentagon and White House is the role of Alexander M. Haig Jr., then Kissinger's top aide, who maintained contact with his old colleagues across the Potomac River.

Haig, according to an American Broadcasting Co. report, played a key role in transferring NSC information to the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The network quoted Haig as denying the report with the observation that, "I cannot be responsible for others misreading my position."

In the view of informed officials, the so-called spying episode between the White House and Pentagon was in no way a "Seven Days in May" scenario with overtones of military challenge to civilian authority.

"The military was trying to maintain what had been legally accessible in the past and which was slowly being choked off," observed an official outside the Pentagon.

Several knowledgeable sources discounted recent press reports that the mutual surveillance incident was the one cited by President Nixon as the "national security" matter that figured in efforts last spring to limit investigation of the White House plumbers.

"I can think of a number of national security-related matters in the investigation of greater consequence than this one," said one source with full access to the Watergate prosecution.

Contributing to this report were Washington Post staff writers Murrey Marder and Bob Woodward.