

# Nixon Role in Snooping

## Officials Wonder Why He Took No Punitive Action on Military Operation

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By SEYMOUR M. HERSH FEB 12 1974

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WASHINGTON, Feb. 11 — There seems to be little question that a military spying operation took place inside the White House throughout much of 1971. Secretary Kissinger,

News  
Analysis

Adm. Thomas H. Moorer, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and Yeoman 1st Cl. Charles E. Radford all

have agreed that at least some documents were funneled from the White House to the Pentagon, although there is significant disagreement among them about how much important material was pilfered.

What is not clear is why President Nixon, who earlier set up the White House group known as the "plumbers" in an effort to stop leaks, took no punitive action in the case of military spying, particularly since the key figure in the spying case, Yeoman Radford, was also suspected of leaking documents to Jack Anderson, the columnist.

In these Watergate-strained days, there are some officials who believe that the current hearings by the Senate Armed Service Committee into the military spying case should also determine, if possible, why Mr. Nixon chose not to cashier Admiral Moorer in early 1972 instead of reappointing him to a second two-year term in the nation's highest military job.

### Nixon's Silence

The President has been silent on the alleged military spying incident. Some White House officials explain the silence by noting that with it Mr. Nixon is attempting to protect the "whole military command structure"; other officials believe, however, that he is merely attempting with his silence to avoid another public debate over his role as Commander in Chief.

Last week Mr. Kissinger, who otherwise has been following the White House lead and seeking to minimize the spying incident, told a Senate committee that the spying "should not have taken place and should not have been tolerated."

But that, by all accounts available thus far, is precisely what happened.

In early 1972, President Nixon reportedly was provided with a report by David R. Young Jr., a former co-director of the plumbers, of the military spying. This report was said to have named Admiral Moorer as being involved in the spying.

In addition, Mr. Young was

said to have concluded that Yeoman Radford, who did much of the actual pilfering of documents, also was responsible for leaking the White House papers on the India-Pakistan war to Mr. Anderson, who published them in December, 1971. It was during his investigation of that leak that Mr. Young learned of the military spying operation.

### Unit Was Shut Down

Mr. Kissinger and his chief deputy, Gen. Alexander M. Haig Jr., who had selected Yeoman Radford as his administrative assistant, immediately shut down the Pentagon's military

liaison unit inside the National Security Council.

It was this incident that was depicted by President Nixon as a cornerstone of his "national security" concerns last spring when he sought to curb the Justice Department's Watergate inquiry into the plumbers' activities.

Yet, Admiral Moorer told newsmen last week that he had twice recommended that Yeoman Radford be court-martialed for his alleged role in passing documents to Mr. Anderson. His requests, he said, were turned down by "higher authorities," whom he would not name.

The petty officer has denied any role in the publication of the Anderson documents, although he has admitted providing the highly classified papers to the Pentagon.

No official outside the White House has been permitted to review the Young report, so it is impossible to determine precisely what evidence Mr. Nixon had before him in deciding not to take any action.

### 4 Explanations

In interviews over the last four months, at least four explanations, or theories, have been offered by Administration officials and others to explain the failure of the President to act:

¶ Although the document-passing operation surely did exist, it was not serious as published reports would indicate. In fact, there has long been a policy of "benign spying"—as one admiral put it—between the White House and the Pentagon and nothing that took place between Yeoman Radford and Admiral Moorer's office was so unexceptional to warrant any action.

Many of the officials who hold this view believe, however, that the current scandal has made a casualty of Admiral Moorer, who had hoped to be

named by President Nixon this year to a third term as chairman.

¶ The President was reluctant to take any action that could lead to public revelation of the spying activities while the Administration was pressing its prosecution of Dr. Daniel Ellsberg for theft of Government property and unauthorized possession of national defense materials.

¶ The President, while extremely concerned about Admiral Moorer's activities, was reluctant to "disrupt the team" that has been involved in major foreign policy decisions involving China, the Soviet Union and North Vietnam. "Tom served him well," one insider said of Admiral Moorer.

¶ The White House, in an election year, was reluctant to chastise publicly or in any way discredit Admiral Moorer, who could retaliate by taking his case—that he was denied national security information to which he had a right—to the public.

¶ The admiral was a long-time friend of Gov. George C. Wallace of Alabama, then viewed as a dangerous threat to Mr. Nixon. The Governor even used the Admiral's photographs in campaign literature in 1971.