

# Kissinger Again Denies Initiating Taps

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WASHINGTON, June 6—

Secretary of State Kissinger, repeatedly questioned today about Watergate at his first news conference since the successful Middle East negotiations, denied again that he had played a direct role in the wiretapping of his aides and insisted anew that he had had no knowledge of the White House "plumbers" operation.

Obviously irritated by the intensity of the questions, Mr. Kissinger shut off one newsman by declaring that "this is a cross-examination."

The afternoon news conference was enlivened by earlier reports that the House impeachment panel had heard evidence in secret today showing that Mr. Kissinger, H. R. Haldeman, the former top Presidential aide, and Alexander M. Haig Jr., then a Kissinger assistant, had initiated 17 so-called national security wiretaps conducted by the Federal Bureau of Investigation between 1969 and 1971.

Six of those who were subject to the wiretaps were members of Mr. Kissinger's National Security Council staff. The House committee took up the wiretapping and the "plumbers" today as part of its investigation into possible Presidential misconduct.

## Review by Prosecutor

The wiretapping issue has also been under review for the last year by the special Watergate prosecutor's office, a number of well-informed sources told The New York Times. The sources said that a task force headed by William H. Merrill, now involved in the prosecution of the "plumbers" case, has not decided whether to press for indictments.

A number of the Watergate prosecutors have expressed doubts about the legality and constitutionality of the bugging.

Mr. Kissinger's role in those activities was explored in detail last September during hearings by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee into his then pending nomination as Secretary of State. Since those hearings, there has been published evidence—much of it derived from the Watergate inquiry—that Mr. Kissinger's role in the wiretapping and knowledge of the "plumbers" were more extensive than he has acknowledged.

Those doubts emerged at the news conference when a reporter asked Mr. Kissinger "whether or not you have consulted with any counsel in preparation for a defense against a possible perjury indictment."

## Hesitancy Noted

The question seemed to stun the newsmen and made the Secretary of State hesitate. "I have not retained counsel and I'm not conducting my office as if it were a conspiracy," he finally answered.

Mr. Kissinger then declared he would "answer no further

questions on this topic," only to be met by a series of sharply pointed queries from Clark R. Mollenhoff, a correspondent for The Des Moines-Register and former aide in the Nixon Administration, who is known for his persistence.

Under those questions, Mr. Kissinger recalled his Senate testimony to the effect that he had supplied names of some aides who had access to material that had been leaked to newsmen. It was those leaks, White House officials have said, that prompted the wiretap program to begin in May, 1969.

Asked whether he had specifically recommend that any staff member be wiretapped, Mr. Kissinger said he had not made such "direct" recommendations. What kind of recommendations, then, did he make, Mr. Mollenhoff wanted to know.

## Question Rebuffed

It was at this point that Mr. Kissinger refused to participate in what he termed a "cross-examination" and moved on to other questioners.

Mr. Kissinger's assertions today were contradicted by a number of House impeachment committee members who sat through a day-long presentation on the Nixon Administration's "domestic surveillance" programs. Late last week the committee completed plans for the Justice Department to supply relevant files and documents on the wiretapping, which ended in February, 1971.

Committee members said that the material presented to them today showed that the White House had obtained no evidence that the wiretaps were justified by national security considerations. Several members of the committee also told newsmen that it was apparent that Mr. Kissinger had "initiated" one of the wiretaps.

In addition, another committee member told The Times that the evidence presented today also showed that at least 54 specific wiretap logs were transmitted to Mr. Kissinger in 1969 and 1970. During his Senate hearings, Mr. Kissinger testified that he had received only "some reports."

## Exchange With Fulbright

In those hearings, the Secretary of State engaged in the following colloquy with Senator J. W. Fulbright of Arkansas, the committee chairman:

Fulbright: Did you at any time specifically make a clear initiative, take the clear initiative yourself on any tap, or even a single one?

Kissinger: No.

Fulbright: You never did?

Kissinger: Not in the sense that said, 'tap this individual.' I carried out the criteria of a previous decision. There could have been, as I pointed out, a different perception by the F.B.I. [which received the wiretap authorizations].

Fulbright: No single tap. The criteria?

Kissinger: No.

Confronted today with questions about those statements,

Mr. Kissinger said he had tried "to prepare my testimony as conscientiously as I could." He added that his testimony before the Senate had been supported by Elliot L. Richardson, then the Attorney General, "on the basis of [his] knowledge of the documents."

The published transcript of those hearings contradicts that assertion, however. It shows that Mr. Richardson, although acknowledging that he did not believe Mr. Kissinger had initiated the wiretaps, also told the Senators that he had come to that belief "after my discussions with Dr. Kissinger."

Mr. Richardson did not cite any documents as the source for his conclusion.

During his recent trip to the Middle East, Mr. Kissinger was asked by newsmen about an affidavit made in late April by John D. Ehrlichman, President Nixon's former domestic ad-

In the affidavit, Mr. Ehrlichman said that he, Mr. Kissinger and Mr. Haldeman had met in California with the President on July 15, 1971, to discuss the transfer of Mr. Young to the "plumbers." The Ehrlichman affidavit also asserted that Mr. Kissinger initially objected to the transfer, but acceded after the Presidential meeting.

Mr. Kissinger, who had told newsmen overseas that he would answer all Watergate queries at his first Washington news conference, nodded in anticipation at the question.

## Declassification Project

"It is improbable," he said, that he had discussed Mr. Young's transfer on July 15. He repeated that he knew only of Mr. Young's assignment to a declassification project, the reason publicly given at the time by the White House for Mr. Young's transfer.

"That was my understanding of David Young's duties," Mr. Kissinger said. He referred the newsmen to the Senate testimony and said, "I have nothing to add to it."

Last January, Mr. Kissinger seemed to contradict his Senate testimony by telling a news conference that he had listened to Mr. Young interrogate a suspect in the December, 1971, military spying scandal that resulted from the publication of the secret White House papers on the India-Pakistan war. Mr. Kissinger explained the apparent discrepancy by stating that he did not know Mr. Young was conducting an investigation when he listened to the tape of the interrogation by Mr. Young.

## Satellite Launched on Coast

VANDENBERG AIR FORCE BASE, Calif., June 6 (UPI) — A satellite was launched today aboard a Titan 3-B Agena combination at the Air Force Space and Missile Test Center. No other details were released by the Air Force.

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