

Clear My Name Or I'll Quit, Kissinger Declares

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SALZBURG, Austria, June 11 — In one of the angriest, most emotion-packed news conferences ever held, Secretary of State Henry Kissinger threatened today to resign unless his name is cleared of charges relating to wiretapping cases.

At times close to tears, his voice choking, Kissinger said he could not conduct his office if his honor is under challenge.

Declaring that he had truthfully testified in his confirmation hearings last fall, Kissinger said he would leave the presidential trip and return to Washington any time the Senate Foreign Relations Committee wished to question him further.

"I do not believe that it is possible to conduct the foreign policy of the United States under these circumstances when the character and credibility of the Secretary of State is at issue," he said at an hour-long press conference in a building on the grounds of Klesheim Palace, where President Nixon is staying.

"And if it is not cleared up," he added, "I will resign."

Kissinger assailed the "selective leak" of documents and asked that there be "a public accounting of those who engage in this defamation of character."

"I have in mind that those who leak documents should step forward and explain what they are doing and why they are doing it," the secretary said.

The leaks have led to speculation that Kissinger may have had a more direct role in the imposition of wiretaps on his aides and newsmen than

he indicated at his confirmation hearing in September. The taps were made from 1969 to 1971 following press revelations of Kissinger's negotiations on major international issues.

A short time after the surprise news conference, announced only moments before it was held, White House press secretary Ronald Ziegler said Mr. Nixon "is sure that those in the United States and in the world who seek peace and are familiar with Secretary Kissinger's contributions to international trust and understanding share

his view that the Secretary honor needs no defense."

Ziegler said that the President recognizes Kissinger's "desire to defend his honor against false charges and the Secretary's strong feeling that he be able to carry out his responsibilities unencumbered by the diversions of the kind of anonymous attack that has so poisoned our national dialogue.

Later, speaking informally to reporters, Ziegler said Kissinger had to get this "out of his system and off his mind" and that he did not expect the Secretary to leave the trip "in mid-stream."

"The trip is going ahead on sched-

ule," Ziegler said. "The President feels that Dr. Kissinger was expressing a personal point based on his personal honor."

Asked if the President does not want Kissinger to resign, the press secretary said the President "would be very reluctant to accept his resignation under this type of circumstance."

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There appeared to be second thoughts tonight in the Nixon entourage about the ultimate effect of the Kissinger reaction. It was known that Kissinger had thought hard and long about his reply ever since his press conference last Thursday when he was stunned by reporters' questions about his wiretap role.

He discussed with other members of the administration his decision to respond to the criticisms, but it was known that he did not discuss it at length with the President. Kissinger was said to have carefully planned what he would say, but no one doubted here that his anger was deep and heartfelt.

Nevertheless, it was plain that he would not have reacted so vigorously but for the effect of Watergate on American opinion.

Having seen criticism of other administration officials build and grow, he was determined to try to nip the attacks on himself vigorously.

When Kissinger walked into the ballroom of the residence where the conference was held, reporters expected him to talk about the Middle East trip the President begins Wednesday when he flies to Cairo.

Instead, he announced that he had "requested this meeting as a result of the series of articles" following his Thursday press conference in Washington where he was questioned about his role in wiretap cases.

The press commented at the time that he seemed "irritated, angered, flustered, discombobulated" by the questions, he said. "All these words are correct."

There followed critical news stories and editorials, he said, prompting him to send a letter to Sen. J. William Fulbright (D-Ark.), chairman of the Foreign Re-

lations Committee, reiterating "the truthfulness and completeness of my testimony" at the confirmation hearings.

"The innuendoes which now imply that new evidence, contradicting my testimony has come to light are without foundation," he said he wrote Fulbright. "All the available evidence is to the best of my knowledge contained in the public and closed hearings which preceded my confirmation."

Nevertheless, Kissinger wrote, "at this sensitive period, I feel it important that the committee which first examined the evidence and which has a special concern with the conduct of foreign affairs should have an opportunity to review it once again."

Kissinger absolved the Foreign Relations Committee of responsibility for the leaks. But he hinted that he believed that the House Judiciary Committee, which now has possession of the relevant documents, was responsible for the leaks criticizing him.

Questioned as to why he would raise such issues on foreign soil on the eve of a critical presidential trip, Kissinger said "only because I wanted to spare the United States the indignity and humiliation of having its Secretary of State, while engaged on a trip to the Middle East, constantly exposed to these public charges."

"I cannot conduct my office if I have to devote my energies to disproving allegations of perjury, nor do I believe that the United States can conduct an effective foreign policy with a Secretary of State who is under attack, and, therefore, I am simply stating a reality."

Asked if he would be satisfied if the leaks ceased, he replied: "No. I think this issue now has to be resolved."

After Kissinger said he thought he ought to resign unless he is exonerated, he was asked whether the President should follow the same standard. He replied in the negative.

Declaring that the President is an elected official and that his position therefore "is quite different from mine," Kissinger said a President must not resign under attack.

That would raise "the most profound issues of na-



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Secretary of State Kissinger: "What I will not leave to history is a discussion of my public honor . . ."

tional policy," he said. "In my judgment, a President can leave office only according to the constitutional processes."

Kissinger said he had told the President he intended to reply to charges against him but had not informed him of his threat to resign.

After reading the letter to Fulbright, Kissinger launched into a lengthy review of the record. Some have charged it demonstrates that he misled the committee regarding his role in wiretapping cases and also in the operations of the White House plumbers' unit designed to stop security leaks.

He explained that he chose to reply now rather than later because it would not be appropriate for him "to go with the President to the Middle East without having a full discussion of the facts as I know them, keeping in mind only that I do not have all my records here with me."

The impression has been created, he said, "that I was involved in some illegal or shady activity that I am trying to obscure with misleading testimony."

After a series of leaks in 1969, he said, the President, after consultation with him, Attorney General John Mitchell and the late FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover, ordered a series of wiretaps. Kissinger defended the taps as legal and something that had been done in every administration since Franklin D. Roosevelt.

He said he received summaries of the FBI findings from the wiretaps, but he heatedly denied reports that his office received descriptions of "extra-marital affairs or pornographic descriptions."

"No verbatim transcript was ever sent to my office," he said, only "a page and a half summary of conversations" relating to national security.

"The implication that my office was spending its time reading salacious reports by subordinates is a symptom of the poisonous atmosphere that is now characteristic of our public discussion," the secretary of state declared.

After May 1970, he said, no more FBI reports were sent to his office although wiretapping continued un-

der White House direction.

He said that in 1969 it was decided that wiretaps would be instituted on individuals on Kissinger's staff who had adverse information in their security files, who had access to documents that had leaked and of individuals whom the FBI discovered in its investigations might be possible sources of leaks.

Kissinger said he did not initiate any requests for wiretaps "that were not triggered either by a security violation or by fulfilling the criteria of adverse information in the security files, and that last criterion was met only once, at the beginning of the program."

Kissinger said he did not apologize for the record of what happened although it was a "painful experience."

"I fully testified to it, and I stand ready to testify again before any appropriate committee," he said.

Kissinger said he knew the contents of all the FBI reports supplied the Foreign Relations Committee and subsequently turned over to the House Judiciary Committee. He said he went over the reports with Foreign Relations Committee members.

It is possible "to find this or that nuance and to engage once again in the process of defaming public officials, but I know for a fact that the testimony I have given was truthful to the best of my recollection," he asserted.

In one of his most emotional statements, Kissinger said "our national debate has now reached a point where it is possible for documents that have already been submitted to one committee to be selectively leaked by another committee without the benefit of any explanation."

Then, his emotions welling up even more, the secretary said he had been identified as one interested primarily in the balance of power.

"I would rather like to think," he said, "that when the record is written, one may remember that perhaps some lives were saved and that perhaps some mothers can rest more at ease, but I leave that to history."

"What I will not leave to history is a discussion of my public honor."