

Transcript of Kissinger Statement and

TIMES, WEDNESDAY, JUNE 12, 1974

Answers to Questions at News Conference

Special to The New York Times

SALZBURG, Austria, June 11—Following is a transcript released by the office of the White House press secretary here of Secretary of State Kissinger's statement and his remarks in response to questions at a news conference.

OPENING STATEMENT

Ladies and gentlemen, I have requested this meeting as a result of the series of articles that have appeared growing out of my press conference last Thursday. I am speaking to you extemporaneously on the basis of my best recollection of events.

Last Thursday, a number of you commented on the fact that I seemed irritated, angered, flustered, discombobulated. All these words are correct. After five weeks in the Middle East I was not thinking about the various investigations going on in the United States. I did not prepare myself for the press conference by reading the records of investigations that I believed had been completed.

I have testified before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in public session, in executive session, and then at a closed meeting with Senator Sparkman and Senator Case, where at my request we went over each F.B.I. report on the wiretaps that existed. The meeting with Senators Sparkman and Case was also attended by Attorney General Richardson and Deputy Attorney General Ruckelshaus, who supplied what information they could from their records or their recollection.

Since that press conference there have been many articles and several editorials. I was prevented by the short time interval between the press conference and the President's departure from holding a press conference in the United States before we left. However, I got in touch with Senator Fulbright, chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on Sunday, and I sent him the following letter yesterday morning which I will now read to you.

Letter to Fulbright

"Dear Mr. Chairman:

"You have no doubt seen the news reports and editorial comments relating to my testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee at the time of my confirmation hearing. They involve fundamental issues concerning the truthfulness and completeness of my testimony, hence they raise issues of public confidence and directly affect the conduct of our foreign policy.

"You will remember that my testimony concerning the national security wiretaps ordered by the President and carried out by the F.B.I. under the authority of the Attorney General was in three parts: public testimony, an extensive executive session, and a session with Senators Sparkman and Case in which we went over relevant F.B.I. files. The meeting with Senators Sparkman and Case was conducted in the presence of the then Attorney General Richardson and the then Deputy Attorney General Ruckelshaus.

"I emphasize this because no new material has appeared since my testimony except a brief excerpt from a Presidential tape, a large part of which is described as unintelligible. The documents now being leaked were, to the best of my knowledge, available to me before my testimony: they were given to Senators Sparkman and Case prior to my meeting with them.

"In a few cases my recollection differed in emphasis from the documents: in those cases I pointed out apparent discrepancies and explained them at the time. The innuendos which now imply that new evidence contradicting my testimony has come to light are without foundation. All the available evidence is to the best of my knowledge contained in the public and closed hearings which preceded my confirmation.

"You are familiar with the details of my testimony, so I shall not repeat them here. Nor do I have any reason to change the testimony presented to your committee in any particular. Nevertheless, 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.

"I should add that if the committee



Secretary of State Kissinger during his news conference yesterday in Salzburg, Austria. Associated Press

decides on a review, I would not object should it wish to examine relevant security files and reports on wiretaps sent to my office.

"I, of course, stand ready to appear at any time."

For a Full Discussion

Since sending this letter, there have been many more articles and more are undoubtedly in the process of preparation. In these circumstances, it is not appropriate for me, as Secretary of State, 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.

I shall now discuss these facts with you. I shall afterwards stay for as long as there are any questions. There will be no ending of the question period as long as there are any questions left to be asked.

First, what is it we are talking about? The impression has been created that I was involved in some illegal or shady activity that I am trying to obscure with misleading testimony. The fact of the matter is that the wiretaps in question were legal, they followed established procedures.

When they were established, the then Attorney General and the then Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation assured me that they were re-instituting procedures that were carried out in previous Administrations.

Before public reputations are attacked or destroyed, elementary fairness requires that this particular statement be looked into and that it be made clear whether the national security wiretaps were in fact carried out in previous administrations.

The history of these wiretaps derives from a series of leaks that occurred in the spring of 1969. As assistant to the President for national security affairs, I had the duty to call the attention of the President to what seemed to me violations of national security.

These violations cannot be assessed

only by analyzing the intrinsic merits of individual documents, but they must be also analyzed in terms of the confidence other governments can have in a government that seems totally incapable of protecting its secrets.

After a series of egregious violations, the President ordered, on the advice of the Attorney General and the director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the institution of a system of national security wiretaps.

I repeat, I was informed when I was told about this system, that it was re-instituted, a system that had existed in previous administrations, even though it may have been administered from different offices.

I was asked to have by office supply names in three categories: individuals who had adverse information in their security files, individuals who had access to information that had leaked, and individuals whose names had appeared as a result of the investigation that submission of the previous two lists might entail.

My office, for which I bear full responsibility, submitted those named in carrying out this program. I would be prepared to let any appropriate investigative body examine the list to make certain that no name was submitted through my office that did not fit into one of these categories.

In submitting these names, we knew that an investigation was certain and that a wiretap was probable and I so testified in the executive session of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, no matter how sentences are now taken out of context.

I testified both to Senator Case and to Senator Muskie that in submitting the names we knew, of course, that a wiretap was a probable outcome. The basic issue is whether through my office or with my knowledge any names were submitted for any purpose other than the protection of national security and whether the information was used for any purpose other than the protection of national security.

When a wiretap was installed, the F.B.I. would send a report to my office only when, in the judgment of the F.B.I., the conversation involved violations of national security. It is totally incorrect and outrageous to say that these taps that were submitted to my office involved a description of extramarital affairs or pornographic descriptions.

Summaries, Not Logs

I do not know what the original logs show. The system that was followed in the operation of the national security wiretaps was, first of all, that no verbatim transcript was ever sent to my office.

What was sent to my office was a page and a half summary of conversations that seemed to the F.B.I. to involve issues of national security. These memoranda were then screened in my office and if, in the judgment of those who screened the memoranda, they were shown to me.

One of the leaks that I have read recently speaks of 54 logs that were allegedly sent to my office. The word "logs" of course, is a lie. What was sent to my office was a page and a half summary.

But, if you consider that during that period that eight or 10 people were being subjected to investigation, that the period covered in which my office received these reports was one year, you have to see that this meant that on the average four and one-half reports a month were sent to my office, of which I saw — I cannot be sure what percentage — maybe one or two.

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.

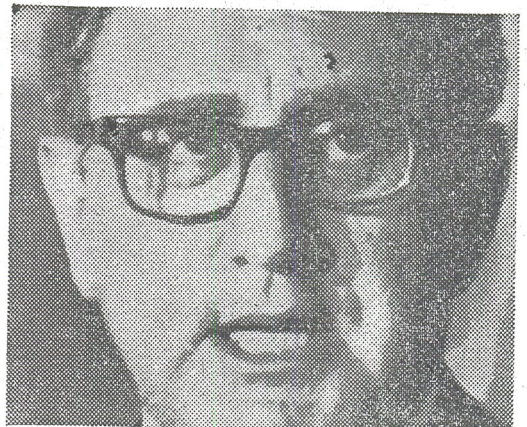
I repeat, if we can find an appropriate forum which will do no damage to the individuals involved, I would not object to letting anybody see the reports that were received in my office.

After May, 1970, it was decided that my office was not equipped to deal with internal security matters and after May, 1970, no reports from the F.B.I.



Associated Press

Secretary of State Kissinger listening to questions and giving replies yesterday at his news conference in Salzburg, Austria. Appearing hurt and angry, he said he would resign unless cleared of allegations of "illegal or shady activity" in Government wire-tapping.



were sent to my office for the remainder of the period but the national security wiretaps remained in force.

During this period, General Haig maintained, at my direction, contact with Director Sullivan of the F.B.I. [William C. Sullivan of the Domestic Intelligence Division]. The reports from that time on were sent to Mr. Haldeman's office. If a report of sufficient gravity had been sent to Mr. Haldeman's office, Mr. Sullivan might inform General Haig and if in the judgment of

General Haig the report was sufficiently serious, I would be informed of the contents, but I would not see the reports.

Declassification Acceptable

To all of this I have testified in executive session before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and I would have no hesitation, if the Senate Foreign Relations Committee decided to declassify the report. I would only ask that the individuals whose names are mentioned be given an opportunity to have the material deleted that refers to the reasons why particular cases in my recollection arose.

When I testified before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, I was aware that my recollection of particular events differed in a few cases from the memoranda. I nevertheless submitted the memoranda pointing out, and I quote, "You have to remember, Senator Case, I was one of those who strongly recommended that the report be given to the committee and that when there was a difference between my recollection and this report, I nevertheless decided to stick to my recollection."

There were three cases, all of which have now been leaked, of such differences, each of which I explained in detail to the committee, to the best of my recollection, after which the committee confirmed me by a vote of 15-1, and I believe that the one negative vote was unrelated to this particular issue.

Now then, this raises a number of questions. The first is, was the program legal? I have already answered that. The second is, was the program administered ethically and properly? I have seen innuendoes according to which allegedly the criteria which I testified to were violated and according to which the first four people that were submitted, according to these criteria, did not really meet these criteria but were united, according to this report, by having worked for the Johnson Administration.

Let me point out that I, too, worked for the Johnson Administration and that I knew President Johnson before I knew President Nixon and that I have never been ashamed of having worked for President Johnson.

Secondly, three of the four people on that original list were appointed to the National Security Council staff by me over the strong objection of all my associates. Two of them were appointed to the national security staff by me over the strong objections of the security officers and I personally gave them a clearance.

Can anybody, in all fairness, believe that three months after appointing these individuals to my staff I would initiate a wiretap program designed to prove that they were security risks, or would not a fair interpretation have to assume that criteria were established that were being met?

Stories about Harassment

Stories have been leaked to the effect that I harassed the director of the F.B.I. with such phrases as, "I will destroy the leakers," and that he was somewhat reluctant about this program. I repeat, the program was instituted

on the recommendation of the Attorney General and the director of the F.B.I. by the President.

The memoranda that was leaked in which I allegedly said, "I will destroy them," is a memorandum that was also available to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. It was a memorandum written by the director of the F.B.I., nine-tenths of which deals with a telephone call that he initiated to me informing me of the security risks that he saw dealing with my material or with the N.S.C. material.

At the end of this conversation, devoted entirely to a recitation by the director of the F.B.I. to various security violations, I said to him, according to his memorandum—I have no recollection of this event today—but according to this memorandum I said, "Keep up the investigation and if you find somebody, we will destroy them."

I think the connotation of this remark is entirely different from that which has appeared in the public press.

All of these facts have been put before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. I know there have been semantic disputes about the words "request," "recommend," "initiate." I spent some time with the Senate Foreign Relations Committee explaining what the significance of the word "request" might be in the context and what the significance of the phrase "initiate" might be.

Of course, in the sense that we sub-

mitted the names of individuals who belonged in the categories which we were ordered to produce, we initiated submitting names. The point I am making is my office 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.

These are the facts of the national security wiretap program as I remember. I do not apologize for it. It is not a shady affair, as has been alleged. It followed legal procedures. I fully testified to it and I stand ready to testify again before any appropriate committee.

The Issue of the Plumbers

Now let me turn to another matter that is also constantly being invoked; the issue of the plumbers and David Young. I testified before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and I said in a press conference that I did not know about the existence of the plumbers by that or any other name. I did not know that David Young was working for the plumbers.

I said this under oath and I repeat it today. I hope none of you are ever in a position that you have to prove the negative of a knowledge.

Now, since then, various stories have come to the fore. There is the argument that I was responsible for the creation of the plumbers because of my concern about the theft of the Pentagon papers, a concern which was transmitted to the President.

There is the argument that I misled the Senate Foreign Relations Committee because I did not tell the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that I had heard a tape in which David Young interviewed an admiral who had information with respect to his security.

There is the argument that I was on a helicopter ride with Mr. Ehrlichman in which the plumbers were discussed. Let me deal with these issues in order. It is perfectly true that I was profoundly disturbed by the publication of the Pentagon papers.

Any assistant to the President for National Security Affairs who was not concerned when 10,000 classified documents appeared in the public print would not be doing his duty. Nor can

my concern be explained away by calling to the intrinsic insignificance of the individual documents or maybe the whole body of documents.

My concern was at that time we were preparing the secret trip to China. I was engaged in secret negotiations with North Vietnam that ultimately led to the end of the American participation in Vietnam. We were also engaged in secret discussions on strategic arms limitation. I was profoundly concerned and so expressed my views to the President, that these initiatives might be aborted if other governments had the idea that the United States Government was not in a position to protect its secrets and that anybody could publish any document and then the proof of its intrinsic significance was left to the Government.

I recognize that national security has been abused in recent years, but because there have been abuses does not mean that there was not justified concern by honorable people. It did not occur to me in expressing my concern that this might lead to the burglary of a doctor's office. It did occur to me that measures might be taken to protect the Government against a recurrence of these leaks.

Conversation on Helicopter

I was in China when David Young was assigned to Mr. Ehrlichman's office. I returned from China the morning of July 13 to learn that Mr. Ehrlichman had recruited one of my staff members. To this I expressed a strong objection.

My impression was as I have testified publicly and as I here repeat, that Mr. Young was assigned to a declassification project that was to last three months and then was publicly announced. I had no reason in the world to deny knowledge of the existence of a group designed to prevent leaks because there was nothing wrong as such with attempting to prevent leaks.

What was wrong was some of the activities that were being conducted by the office. And Mr. Krogh, who headed the office, has publicly stated that I had no knowledge of effect of these. So the only thing at issue is whether I deliberately lied about knowing about the existence of an organization, the substance of which by common agreement I had nothing to do with.

Mr. Ehrlichman describes these meet-

ings, on the 13th, 15th and a subsequent date in July. He places me at only one of these meetings, on a helicopter ride from Los Angeles to San Clemente.

My recollection of that day is that it was the day on which the President announced his China initiative and which I had just returned from China. After the China initiative was announced, the President, Mr. Haldeman, Mr. Ehrlichman, I think Mr. Scali, and I went to a restaurant in Los Angeles to celebrate the event. We then spent a half-hour-to-40-minute helicopter ride from Los Angeles to San Clemente.

My only recollection of this helicopter ride is that Mr. Ehrlichman was needing me about not being able to use my staff properly and therefore having asked for the assignment of Mr. Young to his staff. I repeat, I have no recollection that the plumbers, by that or any other name, were discussed on that helicopter ride although I leave open the possibility that given the noise of a helicopter ride there may have been some misunderstanding.

But I do not use this as an alibi. I have no recollection of such a conversation and no one has ever placed me at any meeting of the plumbers or any meeting where the plumbers were discussed subsequently.

Now, let me turn to the question of whether the fact that I listened to a tape in which Mr. Young interviewed Admiral Welander indicated that I had been less than candid in testifying before the Senate Foreign Relations Com-

mittee.

The question which I answered before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee was as follows. "Did you, when he, namely David Young, left your employment and was transferred to Mr. Ehrlichman, have any idea at that time or any subsequent time that he was to be requested to engage in illegal activities, burglary, conspiracy to burglary or whatever that might be?"

This, ladies and gentlemen, is the question I was answering before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, not the question whether I ever heard anything of David Young.

But I do not want to engage here in legal quibbles. What did I know about the interview of David Young? In the fall of 1971 there were a series of massive leaks of National Security Council documents which appeared in the columns of Mr. Anderson. Some of them included verbatim summaries of meetings of subordinate bodies of the National Security Council. I was told at that time by Mr. Ehrlichman that he was conducting the investigation and that I was to have nothing to do with any part of that investigation.

As a result, a member of my staff, Admiral Welander, reported to General Haig that he concluded from the internal evidence of some of the documents that had leaked that they must have come from his office. General Haig asked me what to do with this and I told General Haig to send Admiral Welander to Mr. Ehrlichman.

Some weeks later, Mr. Ehrlichman called me to his office and played for me the tape that included the questioning of Admiral Welander by David Young. I knew, of course, that David Young was working for Mr. Ehrlichman. But to conclude from this fact that a one-time interview of an individual that my office had discovered and my office had sent to Mr. Ehrlichman; to conclude from this fact either that Mr. Young was conducting a security investigation or even more, Mr. Young was conducting security investigations as his regular activity is inconceivable.

If Mr. Ehrlichman had sent somebody to my office for an interview, I would certainly have assigned a staff member to that task and it would have been impossible to draw from that the implication that this was my staff member's full-time duty.

At the time of the press conference in which David Young's name was raised, I did not know that he wrote a report on his investigation. Of course, I had never seen that report.

Since then I have seen the report in the form of a diary which was submitted to the Senate Armed Services Committee and it makes clear that at no time during this investigation did David Young have any contact with me whatsoever; did David Young talk to me or communicate with me.

Complicated Responsibilities

Now it is true that the conduct of a government is complex and that the responsibilities for the system of national security are complicated. Moreover, I was engaged in many activities in which the protection of documents was the smallest part.

I do not doubt that now when this transcript is analyzed 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.

I joined this Administration five years ago when this country was deeply divided. I felt that with my particular background I had a special obligation to understand the dangers of national division and to do my best to overcome them.

None of you in this room have ever heard me attack the motives or the purposes of those who disagreed with us. All of you in this room know from your profession that the truth very often has intangible aspects.

I believed also that because of my previous associations I had a special obligation toward those who were not frequently members of this Administration and I intended to discharge this through all the turmoil of the national debates, but it seems to me that 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 to another committee without the benefit of any explanation, where public officials are required to submit their most secret documents to public scrutiny, where unnamed sources can attack the credibility and the honor of senior officials of the Government without even being asked to identify themselves.

I have been generally identified, or it has been alleged that I am supposed to be interested primarily in the balance of power. I would rather like to think 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 the discussion of my public honor. I have believed that I should do what I could to heal divisions in this country. I believed that I should do what I could to maintain the dignity of American values and to give Americans some pride in the conduct of their affairs.

I can do this only if my honor is not at issue and if the public deserves to have confidence. If that cannot be maintained, I cannot perform the duties that I have exercised, and in that case I shall turn them over immediately to individuals less subject to public attack.

So I have put before you the facts as I know them. They are consistent with my testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. I do not maintain will not maintain for one day beyond all not maintain for one day beyond the public confidence. I do so because simple fairness requires that either there be exoneration or there be a public accounting of those who engage in this defamation of character.

I repeat, I am willing to repeat under oath before the Congressional committees what I have said here.

I say it here only because I wanted to spare the United States the indignity and humiliation of having a Secretary of State, while engaged on a trip to the Middle East, constantly exposed to these public charges and this is all I want to say, but I will be delighted to answer any questions and I will stay as long as there are questions.

Questions and Answers

Q. Mr. Secretary, in the nature of this meeting it seems terribly important for you to identify those whom you regard as engaged in defaming your character. Can you do that?

A. I do not know the name of the unnamed sources who alleged my testimony before the Senate committee was untruthful, who claimed to know that the facts contradict what I said and I do not know their names.

Q. Then may I follow, please? How can there be a public accounting of those as you suggested at the end of your remarks?

A. I believe that if public officials must give an accounting of their activities, those who print the accusations should state where those accusations come from so that a judgment can be made about the motive of the individuals making them. I have submitted all the documents that I have voluntarily, to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee last year and I explained every document of which I had personal knowledge to the Senate, first in the session with Senator Sparkman and Senator Case and then in the meeting of the full committee. I could do no more than that.

Expectation of More Leaks

Q. Dr. Kissinger, you said today that you felt there were more leaks coming. Is that one of the reasons why you decided to speak to us today? A. No, I am speaking of the leaks with which I am familiar and since I know that not all of the documents have yet leaked, there could be more leaks.

Q. Do you expect that campaign—if you can characterize it that way—will continue?

A. Mr. Chancellor, I do not want to make any estimate of whether this will continue, nor do I even want to question the good faith of those who are leaking the documents. I know the documents that are being leaked. I submitted them to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Individuals reading them without an explanation of the context could easily come to some of the conclusions that have been made. I understand this.

Q. Well, then, who gets the public accounting, sir? If you say that fairness requires exoneration of a public accounting of those who engage in these practices, what sort of published accounting would you have in mind?

A. I have in mind that those who leak documents should step forward and explain what they are doing and why they are doing it.

Q. Mr. Secretary, you seem to imply here that if this campaign is not stopped, you are going to resign. Is that a fair assumption from what you said?

A. I am not concerned with the campaign. I am concerned with the truth. I do not believe 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. And if it is not cleared up, I will resign.

Reaction of President

Q. What has the President said to you in relation to what you told us, and I'm sure you have in various versions given him your same thoughts. What was his reaction?

A. This is a question of my honor and I told the President that I should give you the public accounting and he agreed and we had no further discussion on it whatsoever.

Q. Is this primarily a matter of interpretation? Are you asking that these documents be made public so we can get the just position of the documents? A. If the individuals mentioned in these documents agreed, I have no objection to their being made public.

Q. Dr. Kissinger, would you tell us, please, just who it was who asked you to supply the names of the three criteria you gave. I don't think you gave us the names last year.

A. These three criteria were established at the meeting attended by the President, the Attorney General, and the director of the F.B.I. I do not remember which of the three individuals gave the precise order, but I understood the order to come from the President.

Q. Was it one of those three who passed onto you the three criteria?

A. It occurred at that meeting. Q. I am saying was it one of those three people who told you what the criteria was? A. That is correct. Q. You don't remember which one? A. I do not remember that, no.

Q. Could you also elaborate on the third criteria. Was it really clear as to what it referred to. Could you give us the three again?

A. The three criteria were individuals who had adverse information in their

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security files, individuals who in the course of an investigation appeared as possible sources of leaks. The third category, of course, was largely supplied by the F.B.I., since we did not conduct our own investigation.

Q. Dr. Kissinger, are you suggesting that it is the responsibility of reporters who have read the stories of these leaks and/or editors who have reprinted these stories that they should come forward and identify their sources?

A. I am suggesting that when the credibility of senior officials is put in question on the basis of unnamed sources for the selective leaking of documents and when this attack affects not only the individual concerned, which may be a personal injustice, but affects the standing of the United States in the world, then I believe an obligation exists in one way or another to do this, yes.

Ethics of News Media

Q. Dr. Kissinger, I am sorry if you answered it and I missed it, but are you saying that it is the responsibility of the person who provided this information or the responsibility of the news media that uses it to identify these sources?

A. I don't want to get into a debate about the ethics of the news media and what their responsibility should be, and if it eases the discussion, I will withdraw that particular remark, because it is not the central point of my presentation.

The central point of my presentation was to repeat again on the public record the things that I said in an executive session before the Senator Foreign Relations Committee and to do it in a concise and manageable form and to say that it is not possible to conduct national policy in the face of this sort of attack.

Q. Dr. Kissinger, you are under attack and you think you are being defamed. I also understand that you may have opposed the President's current trip because of this problem in the same area. Did you...

you think? Should it go on under your criteria?

A. I did not oppose the President's trip. The President's position is quite different from mine. He is an elected official. He was invited by the heads of government in a period of great transformation of international affairs and he has a duty as President, as long as he conducts the Presidency, to conduct it in the name of the national interest and not be deflected by what may go on domestically.

Q. Dr. Kissinger, you are suggesting, sir, that those who have made these accusations should state why they are making them. Are you suggesting that is something insidious about this process?

A. I really don't want to get into the debate on side issues. It is not necessary. I am not trying to imply that there is anything insidious about it. But I am trying to imply that there is something happening in our public debate when coming back from a five-week negotiation, I am being asked a question for which I had no conceivable way of being prepared, that could not have been further from my mind and because I was naturally flustered in the reply, as any honorable man would be when he is asked whether he has retained counsel for perjury after having just returned from an extended mission abroad, that then that fact is being used to prove there must be something hidden and there has been something less than candor. But I do not want to turn this into a debate between myself and the newsmedia. I am trying to call attention to an objective problem that exists and to the difficulty, if not impossibility, of conducting national policy in such an atmosphere, whosever fault it is.

U.S. Standing in World

Q. Could I beg a question, sir? You say you are concerned about affecting the standing of the U.S. in the world and yet, at a very critical time, you have raised the prospect of your own resignation which would indeed affect the standing of the U.S. in the world.

On that basis, is it not required that you more specifically define the circumstances under which you will sjelve your statement about the threat to resign?

A. 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 such attack and therefore, I am simply stating a reality. I have attempted, however inadequate, to set some standards in my public life. I cannot set these standards, I do not wish to be in public life.

Q. Would you be satisfied if the leaks ceased, as of now?

A. No I think this issue has to be resolved.

Q. If the Senate Foreign Relations Committee resumed its hearing and went through the whole matter again and gave you a clean bill of health, would you then withdraw your threat to resign? A. Yes. Q. Is that the method you prefer? A. I will not propose a method.

Q. Do you think these leaks are designed to force you to resign, sir? A. I don't believe that, and I do not believe that I am surrounded by a conspiracy. I have not had unfortunate experiences with the press. I think if this can happen to someone whose relationship with the press has been as good as I believe mine has been, then we are facing a national problem, not a personal problem. I do not believe there is the slightest personal animosity against me about this.

Q. Dr. Kissinger, I am still not quite clear in my own mind what you feel your role was in initiating the wire-tapping program. Now you said the decision, if I understand you correctly, was actually made at a meeting between the President, the Attorney General, then Mr. Mitchell, and the then head of the F.B.I., then Mr. Hoover. Now, do you feel that you played a major role in getting that program started or do you feel that you were kind of an innocent bystander who, in effect,

played a minor role? What is your own concept of your role?

A. My concept of my role to which I testified before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, and which Elliot Richardson also supported, I may say, from the record—not on the basis of conversations with me as has been alleged in a newspaper article—My concept of my role was that on a number of occasions, I called to the attention of the President, it would seem to me, very significant security leaks.

This, then, led the President, I believe on the recommendation of the Attorney General and the director of the F.B.I., to institute a program of wiretapping. I did not, myself, propose this program. I was new in the Government and therefore, I also was unaware of the fact that such a program, according to the director of the F.B.I., had also been carried out in every previous Administration since Franklin Roosevelt.

So, in retrospect, I would have to say I undoubtedly contributed, by my description of the security problem, and being new in government, it is possible that in one or two cases I may have taken an exaggerated view of them.

I did not recommend the program as such, though this does not mean that I disagreed with it. I find wiretapping distasteful. I find leaks distasteful, and therefore, a choice had to be made. So, in retrospect, this seems to me what my role has been.

Q. Mr. Secretary, would you go over again once more under what conditions you would withdraw your threat to resign?

A. I believe that the committee which looked over the records initially, which still has all the records available, and which has a primary interest in the Senate in the conduct of foreign policy, might appropriately do it. There may be other mechanisms for doing it. I want to make absolutely clear, I am not making this as a threat in order to gain support. I am stating an objective fact.

It is impossible and incompatible with the dignity of the United States to have its senior official and to have its Secretary of State under this sort of attack

in the face of the dangers we confront and the risks that may have to be run and the opportunities that may have to be seized. This is a fact. This is not a threat.

Q. But, Mr. Secretary, does not that same objective of fact apply to the President of the United States even though he is an elected official?

A. The President is the only nationally elected official. For a President to resign under attack would raise the most profound issues of national policy and in my judgment a President can leave office only according to the constitutional processes that have been foreseen for it, a position which I believe has also been maintained by the leaders of the Democratic party.

I strongly support that position. An appointed official has no such responsibility to the elective process. An appointed official has a responsibility only to the immediate conduct of his affairs.

Q. Dr. Kissinger, you have raised the threat of a resignation on the eve of a trip to the Middle East during a month when you are going to the Soviet Union as the senior foreign policy official of the United States. I am sure a lot of people are wondering, could this threat have waited until the end of these negotiations?

A. Not while there were deadly editorials asking for an explanation of a shady affair, not while editorials say his fitness for public office is at issue, not while headlines say "a blot on Mr. Clean." Under what conditions do you suppose one can conduct one's affairs?

Q. Dr. Kissinger, do you intend to continue this trip, or might you drop out and return to Washington at some point? A. I intend to continue this trip, but I would be glad to return for any Congressional committee that wants me.

Q. Mr. Secretary, could you tell us who has physical custody of the documents that are being leaked today? What groups of people have custody of these documents? A. I believe the House Judiciary Committee has custody of some of the documents that are being leaked. Q. The Senate Foreign Rela-

tions Committee? A. I don't believe they have them. The Senate Foreign Relations Committee in all my dealings with them never led any of these documents. I do not know whether they have custody of them. I don't believe so. Q. The White House has copies of them. A. The White House probably has copies of them, I don't know.

Ethics of His Actions

Dr. Kissinger, did you at the time when these decisions were being made have any doubt about the ethicality—save the legal aspects—did you at any time have a question in your own mind whether it was ethical or not and now with the benefit of hindsight do you have any doubt at all in your mind that it was ethical?

A. At the time I found it an extremely painful process. It involved in some cases individuals with whom I had been closely associated. It involves threats to individuals, who if they had been found to be security leaks, would have reflected badly on my own judgment.

So I did not find it a task that was particularly pleasant. But I could not quarrel with the judgment and I did not quarrel with the judgment of those who found it necessary.

At my confirmation hearings I testified in executive session—not in public session—I testified in executive session that stricter regulations than were then in force or had been in force in previous administration would be compatible with the objective of national security.

Q. You said a few minutes ago that you told the President you were going to come out here and raise these issues. Two questions: have you discussed with him specifically the possibility of your resignation? A. I did not discuss the content of what I would say with the President.

Q. Have you discussed the possibility of your resignation and if so, what has been his reaction? A. I have not discussed the content of this press conference with the President before giving it. I felt this was a matter in which I had to state my view.

THE PRESS. Thank you, Mr. Secretary.