

Kissinger Backed by Ruckelshaus

By Bob Kuttner

Washington Post Staff Writer

Former acting FBI Director William D. Ruckelshaus yesterday supported Henry A. Kissinger's account of the role the Secretary of State played in the FBI wiretaps of 17 government officials and newsmen.

Ruckelshaus, who first investigated and confirmed the existence of the taps a year ago, said Kissinger's role "is pretty much as he's described it."

At issue is whether Kissinger misrepresented his involvement in the tapping to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee during hearings last September on his nomination to be Secretary of State. At that time, Kissinger assured the committee that he merely provided the FBI with names of officials with access to the leaked documents.

However, FBI memoranda supplied to the House Judiciary Committee—and also leaked to the press—indicate that Kissinger's office initiated 14 of the 17 taps. It was those leaks and the inference of deception or even perjury that prompted Kissinger's threat last week to resign.

See TAPS, A8, Col 1.

TAPS, From A1

Ruckelshaus suggested that the confusion is over the word, 'initiate.'

"In the sense that he supplied the names, he initiated it," Ruckelshaus told interviews on the program "Face the Nation" (WTOP, CBS). "But his definition of initiation is that it wasn't his idea to tap; he simply complained about the leaks."

Other officials friendly to Kissinger have suggested privately that Hoover's memos identifying Kissinger as instigator of the taps can be explained as a familiar bureaucratic device intended to protect the FBI by placing responsibility elsewhere.

However, Ruckelshaus offered another explanation.

"There was a previously determined program to stop leaks," Ruckelshaus said, adding that the program called for Kissinger's office to provide the names of suspected leakers.

"In the process of supplying those names, it may well have been described in FBI memoranda that this was a request coming from the National Security Council or Mr. Kissinger..."

Ruckelshaus confirmed that he did not interview Kissinger as part of his investigation. And he agreed that "there are



WM. D. RUCKELSHAUS
... sees "more surprises"

questions" about why some persons with "only a peripheral, if any, relationship to national security" were among those tapped.

On related topics, Ruckelshaus said he believes some of the Watergate sentences imposed after plea bargaining were too light, and that President Nixon has not yet disclosed all pertinent Watergate information.

"My guess is that there will be more surprises," Ruckelshaus added.

Ruckelshaus resigned as deputy attorney general last October over the firing of Watergate Special Prosecutor Archibald Cox.