

Ford, Nixon And Chain Of Command

See SFC 24 Aug 74
Washington

President Ford conferred with Defense Secretary James R. Schlesinger yesterday about reports that a close watch was kept during the last days of President Nixon's term to make sure that no orders were given to military units outside the normal chain of command.

"I have been assured that no measures of this nature were actually undertaken," Mr. Ford said in a statement issued by his press secretary, Jerald F. TerHorst.

TerHorst did not say exactly to what measures the President was referring and refused to elaborate on his statement. But he did mention published reports of unusually close control over the lines of command.

TerHorst pointed out that the chain of command in the system of U.S. government "worked pretty well during those days of travail," and "all agencies of government performed and functioned as we would expect them to."

Schlesinger had said previously that "in keeping with my statutory responsibilities I did assure myself that there would be no question about the proper constitutional and legislated chain of command, and there never was any question."

^{24 Aug} Pentagon officials said Saturday that word was passed to military commanders to make sure none of them took an order from the White House, not necessarily from Mr. Nixon, or elsewhere that did not come down through military channels. The action was described merely as a precaution in unusual circumstances.

TerHorst said he was "not denying any accounts" as he gave the brief statement from Mr. Ford.

Associated Press