

U.S.I.A. Chief Denies He Faces Ouster

By DAVID BINDER
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WASHINGTON, Sept. 18—James Keogh, director of the United States Information Agency, said today that President Ford had called him to declare that there was "not a scintilla of truth" to a report that the President intended to dismiss him.

Mr. Keogh reported this to senior agency officials at a regular staff meeting this morning. President Ford called him yesterday morning, he said.

He said Mr. Ford had expressed the intention to retain him as director of the U.S.I.A., an agency spokesman said.

Opposed by Hays

On Saturday The New York Times quoted a political associate of Mr. Ford as saying that the President planned to dismiss Mr. Keogh, who was appointed to head the agency in December, 1972, by President Nixon.

The associate reportedly raised objections to Mr. Keogh in a conversation with the President last week.

As a former campaign aide of President Nixon, Mr. Keogh has acquired sharp critics among Democrats on Capitol Hill. Chief among them is representative Wayne L. Hays of Ohio. Mr. Hays said today he intended to hold hearings on Mr. Keogh's conduct of U.S.I.A.

Mr. Keogh has also been criticized by several men who held high administrative positions in the Voice of America, which broadcast radio programs abroad, and were transferred to other jobs during the last nine months.

'Emphasis on News'

Early in the summer Mr. Keogh ordered an independent management study of the Voice of America by four former Foreign Service officers. The study asserted there was a "coterie of four to six officers" who tried to decide operational policy and reorganization plans without consulting other department heads. The study said this caused demoralization at the radio station.

The independent study also concluded that the "coterie" had created "excessive empha-

sis on news" in Voice of America broadcasts.

Drawing on the study, Mr. Keogh authorized the transfers of most of the men described as belonging to the "coterie."

One of them, Nathan Kingsley, the former program manager who was transferred last month to the State Department's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, later told friends that Mr. Keogh had argued with him about Voice coverage of the Watergate scandal.

Mr. Keogh's congressional critics subsequently asserted that under his leadership the Voice of America had been "soft" on Watergate, and should be dismissed.

In a telephone interview last week Mr. Keogh remarked that the Voice of America problems were related to the management study and not to Watergate coverage.