

Nixon Reportedly Cites Kissinger Role in Taps

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Former President Nixon has testified secretly that he believed Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger could have stopped FBI wiretaps of specific government officials and reporters upon request, according to a source familiar with the sworn testimony.

The source generally confirmed earlier reports that the former President also testified he provided no specific names for the wiretap program.

Instead, Nixon reportedly testified, he asked Kissinger—then his national security adviser in the White House—to provide the FBI with names of persons who had access to classified information that allegedly was leaked to the press.

The sketchy reports of the still largely secret testimony again raised questions about Kissinger's role in the wiretap program.

Kissinger has maintained that his role was limited to the providing of names at Nixon's request. Kissinger reiterated that position in sworn testimony filed in court last week.

In addition, Kissinger said FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover specifically selected the persons to be tapped, and made his first four choices at a meeting in Nixon's presence at the White House.

Kissinger also said he considered Nixon's general approval of a wiretap program to include the specific approval of names mentioned by Hoover as possible wiretap targets.

Nixon reportedly denied that version of the program's origin in his testimony, but said he did not dispute Kissinger's recollection and could not criticize Kissinger for holding that view.

Former Attorney General John N. Mitchell and former White House aide John D. Ehrlichman have referred to the wiretap program as "the Kissinger taps." Kissinger says he had no control over the taps program, which he considered in the hands of the FBI.

Nixon testified for (nearly seven hours Thursday) at his home in San Clemente, Calif., in connection with a law suit filed by former National Security Council aide Morton Halperin, whose home telephone was tapped for 21 months during the program.

The government contends the taps were a legitimate use of presidential power; Halperin contends they were illegal and politically motivated.

Halperin refused yesterday to discuss the substance of Nixon's testimony, saying he considered it secret until it is filed in court.

One of Halperin's attorneys, American Civil Liberties Union lawyer John Shadduck III, refused to comment, saying, "We want to keep very clean hands. It seems Nixon has decided to tell his side of the story."

One source said Nixon, who gave lengthy answers that included views on foreign policy, described Kissinger as agreeing readily to the use of wiretaps to discover leaks.

Nixon also is reported to have defended in detail his decision to implement the wiretap program.

According to documents filed in the Halperin suit, the taps were ineffective in discovering leaks.

Halperin and his attorneys also questioned former White House aide H. R. (Bob) Haldeman on a swing through California last week. None of that testimony has been made public.

Nixon, Haldeman, Kissinger, Mitchell, Ehrlichman and numerous other past and present government officials are named in the Halperin suit.