

Kissinger Testifies On FBI Wiretaps

Washington

Secretary of State Henry Kissinger contended in sworn testimony released yesterday that he had played a "substantially passive" role in the wiretapping of 17 government officials and newsmen that was undertaken between 1969 and 1971 purportedly to stem unauthorized disclosures in the press.

In a deposition taken on March 30 in the civil damage suit brought by Morton H. Halperin, one of those whose home phones were tapped by the FBI, Kissinger repeated his previous assertion that chief responsibility for the taps lay with former President Nixon and J. Edgar Hoover, the late director of the FBI.

Mr. Nixon, in his own deposition in the Halperin case last January, seemed to suggest that Kissinger was responsible for supplying the names of the first four people to be tapped — including Halperin.

But Kissinger, in an earlier "interrogatory" in the case and again in the deposition, has stressed that Hoover first supplied the names of Halperin and the other three.

Kissinger had stated in the

earlier "interrogatory" that he believed a White House meeting had taken place on April 25, 1969, involving himself, Nixon, Hoover, and then Attorney General John Mitchell, to discuss the problem of leaks in the press.

At that session, he said, "Director Hoover identified four persons as security risks, and suggested that these four be put under surveillance initially." Halperin, one of the top aides on the National Security Council staff which Kissinger then directed, was one of those four.

Halperin, in a brief session with the press yesterday, stated that there is no record of such an April 25 meeting taking place and that the evidence shows that Kissinger actually selected the names to be tapped.

Mr. Nixon, in his deposition, said that after a New York Times story appeared on May 9, 1969, disclosing secret bombing raids against Cambodia, he told Kissinger to inform Hoover of "any names that he considers to be prime suspects," for the leak.

Given the inconsistency between Mr. Nixon's account and Kissinger's recollection, Kissinger was asked by Halperin's lawyer in

the deposition if he could still state "affirmatively" that he remembered Hoover identifying the four possible security risks.

"Yes," Kissinger replied, "because this was a rather startling piece of information to me."

Kissinger said that "my understanding was that the President ordered the whole program, and that this included the names of the people that Director Hoover had mentioned."

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