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Information Withheld?

KISSINGER ANSWERS HIS CRITICS

SECRETARY OF STATE Henry Kissinger mounted a counteroffensive against his critics on December 9.

In the course of a hurriedly called news conference shortly before his departure for talks with European allies, Mr. Kissinger made these points:

- The charge that he has deliberately withheld information of Soviet violations of the nuclear-arms agreement—"False."
- The charge that the President was not briefed on violations—"False."
- The charge that he refused to deal with the reported violations—"False."
- The charge that there were secret agreements with Russia: "Essentially false."

Mr. Kissinger qualified his last denial because, it was explained, the text of one "interpretative statement" by the U.S. was not distributed throughout the American "bureaucracy."

Details from the official transcript of the news conference:

Has the President been kept informed? The Secretary of State said "there is no instance in which . . . a reported violation—an alleged violation—was not immediately reported to the President."

Also, he added, the "daily brief" and Central Intelligence Agency summary that are on the President's desk every morning include reports of violations.

Since the middle of 1973 there have been 10 special presidential briefings on violations. Quarterly reports on the violations are prepared by a special intelligence committee and sent to the President, among others.

The National Security Council held one session "solely devoted" to violations, discussed the issue at other meetings. Its SALT (Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty) Verification Panel met four times on violations alone, 40 other times when violations were considered.

Did U.S. ignore the violations? Mr. Kissinger revealed that puzzling construction in "Soviet missile fields" in the summer of 1973 set off six diplomatic exchanges with the Russians over the "presidential channel."

Other consultations, some still under way, were set up to deal with Soviet radar tests in Kamchatka, development of huge new missiles, Russian interference with U.S. photographic or other surveillance of Soviet developments.

Was there U.S.-Soviet collusion to mask violations? Mr. Kissinger said: "It stands to reason that no responsible U.S. official could wish to make an agreement with the Soviet Union and permit the Soviet Union to violate it with impunity. . . .

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"I would, in fact, suggest that this debate [in the U.S.] of the allegation in which some violations are invented, and in which the lack of vigilance of the Administration is asserted, may tempt the very noncompliance which it claims to seek to avoid, because it may create the impression that the United States Government would make a serious agreement affecting the survival of the United States and that its senior officials would then collude in a violation of this agreement.

"Let no foreign Government believe that this is conceivable."

U.S. on alert. The Secretary of State cited several examples of how U.S. alertness prevented actual or potential violations of arms agreements by Russia.

Soviet SA-5 radar testing on Kamchatka, bordering the North Pacific, in 1973 did not at first seem in violation of the treaty limiting anti-ballistic-missile systems. But, Mr. Kissinger said:

"Between April and June, 1974, some more tests took place which at least raised the problem that the radar might be tracking incoming missiles," which is not permitted.

In December, 1974, it was decided not to raise the issue with Russia—a decision based "on the recommendation of the Defense Department and the Central Intelligence Agency . . . because we did not wish to reveal the source of our intelligence."

In January, 1975, the Defense Department recommended that the issue be raised with the Soviets, and it was, in February, 1975. The result, according to Mr. Kissinger:

"Within a 17-day period after we raised the issue, [Soviet] activity had stopped, has not since been resumed.

"It was at the borderline of violation, but it has now stopped."

In fact, Mr. Kissinger added, the U.S. was "dealing with a technical issue of what an agreed test range is—since there is no disagreement that the radar in Kamchatka faces into the Soviet Union, and therefore must be used for some sort of internal tracking." Such testing, he said, would be legal if the Kamchatka site were listed as a test range—which it was not.

In the summer of 1973, the Secretary of State revealed, the U.S. detected "in a number of Soviet missile fields, the beginning of some construction that clearly looked like additional silos." If converted into tubes for missiles, "there was no question that they would have represented a clear violation of the agreement."

The Soviet response to a U.S. note: The silos were for command and control—which is permissible. During six exchanges of notes the U.S., said Mr. Kissinger, "began to advance the criteria which could be met in order to assure us that these silos were, in fact, intended for command and control. . . . We have since received assurances, and I believe it is the unanimous opinion of all agencies, that we are dealing with command and control silos."

SS-19 missile. A further cause for alarm, said the Secretary, was the SS-19 missile. It is small enough to fit into an "SS-11 hole," which is permitted. But the SS-19 "could be as much as 40 per cent larger," so in current SALT talks, "we are attempting to put limitations" on the SS-19.

Since the mid-1960s, the Secretary revealed, the Soviets have been seeking ways "to make photography and other means of detection more complicated."

While "nothing has decisively interfered with our national means of detection," he said, the U.S. has raised the issue with the Russians.

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Mr. Kissinger underlined this point: Signed treaties do not solve all problems in limiting strategic arms, but they do set rules. It is up to the U.S. to keep watch for violations—and to talk them out with Russia when they occur.

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