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Kalb quits State over purported false leaks

By Richard Beeston
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The State Department's spokesman Bernard Kalb dropped a bombshell yesterday by resigning on the eve of President Reagan's departure for Reykjavik over what he called the administration's "disinformation program" against Libya.

His resignation inevitably gives credence to charges that the administration has been spreading "disinformation" in the American media in

an effort to help topple Libyan leader Muammar Qaddafi. State Department officials expressed concern it would harm U.S. credibility right before the summit.

At an emotional last State Department press conference, Mr. Kalb declared, "I am concerned about the impact of the disinformation program on the credibility of the United

States and its faith. Faith in the word of America, in my opinion, is the pulsebeat of our democracy."

Mr. Kalb, a former correspondent for CBS and NBC who has been spokesman for nearly two years, said he had been "grappling" with the issue ever since last week's press reports of the disinformation campaign.

He said he had faced a choice of "whether to vanish into unopposed acquiescence, or to enter a modest dissent."

In announcing his surprise resignation, Mr. Kalb said his move was no reflection on his chief, Secretary of State George Shultz, whom he called "a monument to integrity."

"Rather, I am dissenting from the reported disinformation program," he said. In reply to questions, he said he could provide no information on the so-called disinformation campaign. He added, "My resignation does not endow me with sudden freedom."

Mr. Shultz, in a brief statement, said that he was "sorry to see Bernie Kalb go." He said he respected him "as a colleague and a friend" and wished him well.

Earlier Mr. Shultz said, in an interview on ABC's "Good Morning America," that, while the administration had sought to confuse Col. Qaddafi, it had not lied to American reporters.

"There isn't any intent to try to spread around false information here so that it gets there and confuses him. That's not the idea at all," he declared, adding, "We shouldn't get involved in any operation where we try to mislead our news media or our public."

At the same time Mr. Shultz said, "When we hit Qaddafi, it did disorient him, and it did put terrorism down for a while, and we want to keep it that way." Asked whether Mr. Shultz or the State Department had in fact played a role in a disinformation campaign, Mr. Kalb replied, "I am making no accusations."

Last week Mr. Shultz declared, "I know of no decision to have people go out and tell lies to the media." But at the same time, he appeared to

modify that stand by quoting a phrase by Winston Churchill, who said, "In time of war, the truth is so precious, it must be attended by a bodyguard of lies."

Mr. Kalb, who appeared close to tears during his resignation address, ended his press conference on a lighter note.

Asked what he intended to do next, Mr. Kalb, known for his flamboyant neckware replied, "My plans are to hold a memorial service for my orange tie."