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Rusk Helped Otepka Case Clarification

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Associated Press

Secretary of State Dean Rusk intervened personally to set the record straight on sworn testimony three subordinates gave to the Senate Internal Security Subcommittee.

This was brought out yesterday when the Subcommittee made public the record of a closed hearing held Nov. 14 in its continuing investigation of State Department security practices.

Two of the subordinates, John F. Reilly and Elmer Dewey Hill, have since resigned. Reilly was Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Security. Hill was chief of the division of technical services in the security office.

The third, David I. Belisle, who was Reilly's special assistant, is still working for the Department.

Reilly, Hill and Belisle all swore to the Subcommittee last summer that they had no knowledge of any listening devices being installed in the office of Otto F. Otepka, a veteran State Department security officer.

Rigging Admitted

But in statements they submitted to the Subcommittee on Nov. 6, they acknowledged that wiring in Otepka's telephone had been rigged last March to permit eavesdropping.

Otepka, accused by the Department of unauthorized disclosure of information to the Subcommittee's chief counsel, was dismissed last fall over the Subcommittee's protest. He has an appeal pending.

Thomas Ehrlich of the State Department's legal office testified at the Nov. 14 hearing that the supplemental statements of Reilly, Hill and Belisle were submitted after Rusk said he wanted that done.

The Subcommittee had called Rusk's attention to their sworn denials of the "bugging" of Otepka's phone.

J. G. Sourwine, the Subcommittee's chief counsel, asked Ehrlich if he regarded the Nov. 6 statements as "merely supplemental or clarifying or do they correct the testimony previously given?"

Ehrlich replied that the thrust of Sourwine's question, as he understood it, was "whether one or more of the individuals committed perjury." He said "I could not give that legal judgment without a very, very careful answer."

Gave Three Assistance

Testifying that he had assisted Reilly, Hill and Belisle in preparing the statements,

Ehrlich said they were completed the night of Nov. 5, shortly after Sen. Thomas J. Dodd (D-Conn.) had told the Senate that the Subcommittee had evidence of Otepka's phone being tapped and spoke of possible perjury.

But Ehrlich emphasized that Rusk had said several days before Dodd's speech that he wanted Reilly, Hill and Belisle to submit statements amplifying their testimony to the Subcommittee.

Belisle, who was the principal witness at the Nov. 14 hearing, was asked if Dodd's speech about possible perjury had anything to do with the submission of the statements within 24 hours.

"I would imagine that it did; yes, sir," Belisle replied.



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