

OCT 14 1967

Sanitized - Approved For Release : CIA-RDP75-0

Rostow Denies Report On Security Clearance

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By the Associated Press

An assertion that Walt W. Rostow, now a special assistant to President Johnson, was three times denied security clearance by the Eisenhower administration reportedly is contained in a brief filed in a Civil Service case. Asked about the report, Rostow denied it.

"From 1951 onward," Rostow told a reporter, "I had continuous security clearance from various agencies of the federal government."

In 1951, Harry S. Truman was President. Rostow did not say what assignment he had in 1951 that required clearance. His biographical data in Who's Who lists him as a staff member (1951-1960) of the Center for International Studies, a private agency.

The brief in question was filed last month by attorney Roger Robb, representing Otto F. Otepka in the fight Otepka is making against dismissal as the State Department's chief security evaluations officer. The step was part of proceedings at a closed hearing being held by the department.

The brief has not been made public, and Robb declined to discuss it.

However, a source who has seen it said that it does make the statement with respect to Rostow and the Eisenhower administration.

This informant, who requested anonymity, said it was his understanding that in fact there was no question of security involved in the Eisenhower administration's rejection of Rostow for certain assignments—that the reason simply was that Rostow did not meet the particular requirements.

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In general, the brief is said to contend that a "get-Otepka drive" came after Otepka's refusal to clear Rostow without a field investigation at the time President Kennedy's administration was taking office.

Rostow, then a professor of economics at Massachusetts Institute of Technology, was brought into the government by Kennedy. His first post was as deputy special assistant, No. 2 to McGeorge Bundy as White House foreign affairs adviser.

In December 1961 he was transferred to the State Department as counselor and chairman of the Policy Planning Council. He returned to the White House when Bundy left in 1966 and is now the top White House foreign affairs adviser.

The brief is understood to cite testimony Otepka gave at a closed hearing in June before Edward A. Dragon, the hearing officer for his appeal. The account as outlined was:

Otepka testified that in December 1960—the month before President Kennedy took office—he was called into a meeting with Dean Rusk, then secretary of state-designate in the new administration, and Robert F. Kennedy, picked by his brother to be attorney general.

He quoted Rusk and Kennedy as saying Rostow would be appointed to a State Department post and as asking that Rostow be given an emergency clearance without the usual field investigation.

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Otepka said he also was asked how he would apply the security rules in the cases of presidential appointees and in the case of Rostow in particular.

The brief quoted Otepka as having replied that in principle he was against emergency clearance authority and that, in particular, he knew of certain Central Intelligence Agency and Air Force security documents in Rostow's file which compelled him to insist on a full field investigation.

The brief goes on to assert that Rostow was rejected for security clearance in 1955 in a decision by Herbert Hoover Jr., then undersecretary of state in the Eisenhower administration, and twice later by Roderick O'Connor, then administrator of the State Department's Bureau of Security.

Requests were made for comment from Rusk and Sen. Kennedy, D-N.Y., on Otepka's story of the December 1960 meeting.

Fred Mankiewicz, press secretary to Kennedy, said "the senator does not recall" such a conversation with Otepka and Rusk.

Robert J. McCloskey, State Department press officer, said after consulting with Rusk that "the secretary does not expect to comment on any matter involving Mr. Otepka while his case is pending in the department."