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RFK Behind Flap Over LBJ, CIA

WASHINGTON — There was a significant backstage story behind the conflicting news reports as to whether President Lyndon B. Johnson knew about the \$3 million CIA subsidy for American student groups. What touched off the buzz of conflicting reports was a background press conference held by none other than Sen. Bobby Kennedy, D-N.Y., who called in reporters and indicated to them very clearly, though not for attribution, that President Johnson had known all about the CIA subsidy.

It was unfair for the CIA, Bobby said, to "take the rap." The subsidy operation was known to "the highest levels of the government," Bobby told his press conference, again not for attribution.

This was the source of the stories attributed to "one of the highest officials in both the Kennedy and Johnson administrations."



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Real fact of the CIA subsidy, however, is that Johnson did not know about it until the end of January when W. Eugene Groves, president of the National Student Association, called on Douglas Cater, a presidential assistant at the White House, to say that Ramparts magazine was going to break the story of the CIA subsidy. Cater wanted to know whether the facts were correct and was told that they were. Groves, however, gave the impression that the subsidy had terminated.

Cater reported the matter to the President, who referred it to Undersecretary of State Nicholas Katzenbach, both for an investigation of the facts and to see what future American policy should be. He chose Katzenbach because Katzenbach had served in both the Kennedy and Johnson administrations.

Katzenbach is now investigating the entire question of student activities and the government.

The incident has not helped improve relations between the President and the young man who wants to be President namely, Sen. Robert Kennedy.

In the first place, what Bobby didn't tell newspapermen at his background press conference was that he had been chairman of a committee appointed by his brother to review all CIA activities after the Bay of Pigs fiasco. He had continued as chairman of the Interdepartmental Committee in Charge of Central Intelligence. As such, he knew every move made by the CIA and every major appropriation it allocated. He not only knew of the subsidy to the student groups, but had encouraged more of this type of activity.