

Rusk Given Wider Say On Policy

Overseas Activity Is Target of New Presidential Order

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President Johnson gave what might prove to be major new power to Secretary of State Dean Rusk yesterday to direct United States operations overseas.

The White House announced, after a Cabinet meeting, that:

"... The President has directed the Secretary of State, as his agent, to assume responsibility to the full extent permitted by law for the overall direction, coordination and supervision of interdepartmental activities of the United States Government overseas (less exempted military activities)."

'Streamlining' Planned

Until now, the Secretary of State has had only "coordination," and not "direction" powers.

To carry out the new order, a general "streamlining" of foreign policy machinery will take place in the State Department.

Under Secretary of State George W. Ball will execute the new interdepartmental authority delegated to the Secretary of State. Ball will head what the White House called "an inclusive, decision-making body," known as the Senior Interdepartmental Group (SIG).

Washington was filled yesterday with official explanations, and contradictory privately expressed versions, of what lay behind the new order.

A White House source described it, perhaps most succinctly, as a procedure to enable President Johnson to put

his finger quickly on the single person responsible for American action in a given country. It long has been the President's desire to have one ranking Washington official do. See ORGANIZE, A15, Col. 5

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countable for all the ills that can arise in a region or nation overseas, whether the problem is diplomacy, subversion, agriculture or housing.

The declared objective was couched in ambiguous turgid bureaucratese: To create "a regular meeting place for the key officials involved in overseas activities" and assure "decisive action by giving unusual authority to the 'Executive Chairman' (Ball)."

The order appeared to be another step in President Johnson's turning of the Government mechanism back toward traditional lines, away from the more informal approach employed in the Kennedy Administration. The late President dispensed with much of the standard national security board and planning group structure.

It was denied on all sides that the order was connected with the departure of McGeorge Bundy, who served Presidents Johnson and Kennedy as Special Assistant for National Security Affairs with unusual prestige and authority.

The studies that produced the new order began long before, and without relationship to, Bundy's resignation. But if the new procedure works out

to the President's satisfaction, it was conceded it could absorb some of the functions that Bundy performed.

According to other sources, the prime purpose of the new order is to detect problems of counter-insurgency around the world that could explode into crisis of "wars of national liberation."

The two principals in proposing the new plan were retired Gen. Maxwell D. Taylor, former Ambassador to South Vietnam, and U. Alexis Johnson, who served as Deputy Ambassador to Taylor and has now resumed the post of Deputy Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs.

If the grant of authority is borne out in practice, the State Department would become what it now is only in theory: the dominant instrument of total American actions abroad.

A complaint that has echoed in Washington for years was expressed in 1961 by the Senate Subcommittee on National Policy Machinery, headed by Sen. Henry M. Jackson (D-Wash.): "State is not doing enough in asserting its leadership across the whole front of foreign policy."

The White House said that Ball, as head of the Senior Interdepartmental Group, will

have "authority and responsibility to decide all matters coming before his committee, subject to the right of any member to appeal from his decision to higher authority."

On Ball's committee as regular members will be the Deputy Secretary of Defense, the Administrator of the Agency for International Development, the Director of the Central Intelligence Agency, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Director of the United States Information Agency, and the President's Special Assistant for National Security Affairs.

Internally, the State Department's regional Assistant Secretaries of State will serve as executive chairmen of interdepartmental Regional Groups that will include representatives of the same Government-wide agencies.

The object is to have, in Washington, a counterpart of the "country teams" that operate abroad, headed by an Ambassador, with control authority over all American operations ranging from labor, health, intelligence and foreign aid activities, to diplomacy. Officials said this will require some extensive, but gradual reorganization of functions inside the State Department.