

Sorensen withdraws as CIA nominee

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WASHINGTON (AP) — Theodore C. Sorensen withdrew on Monday as President-elect Carter's nominee to head the Central Intelligence Agency, standing aside to avoid a Senate confirmation fight he said would have handicapped the new administration.

Carter agreed that was the best way out of the controversy about Sorensen's record and credentials for the top intelligence post, but said he regretted the loss of "an extremely talented and dedicated man."

A spokesman said Carter will choose a new nominee for the CIA post some time after the inauguration on Thursday. Until a new appointee is named and confirmed, the CIA apparently will be run by E. Henry Knoche, a 25-year agency veteran now serving as deputy director.

While Sorensen was becoming the first casualty of the new administration, three top-level Carter appointees appeared before the Senate committees at relatively routine confirmation proceedings. Only one, Atty. Gen.-designate Griffin B. Bell, faced controversy, and his approval seemed virtually assured despite his critics.

Sorensen withdrew after denouncing "scurrilous and unfounded personal attacks against me" by opponents who questioned his use of classified documents after the administration of John F. Kennedy and his draft classification as a conscientious objector.

The 48-year-old New York attorney, once Kennedy's righthand man, said the opposition really stemmed from disagreement with his view of the way the

CIA should function.

Sorensen told the Senate Intelligence Committee he was withdrawing because there was enough opposition to point to a divisive controversy about his confirmation.

He said he used a pay telephone in the Senate office building to tell Carter of his

decision, minutes before the initial committee hearing on his nomination.

In Plains, Ga., Carter said Sorensen's action was "designed to spare the administration and the country the effects of a divisive and emotional controversy."