

Otepka Says Nixon Nominee for Treasury Post 'Leaked' Information to the Press

By DAVID BINDER

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WASHINGTON, Oct. 2—A former security evaluator for the State Department charged today that Helmut Sonnenfeldt, the White House nominee for Under Secretary of the Treasury, had "leaked" classified information to the late Robert F. Kennedy and to numerous members of the Washington press corps.

The accusations were made at confirmation hearings before the Senate Finance Committee by Otto F. Otepka, who made a reputation as a relentless hunter of subversives until his removal from the security evaluation post in 1963.

In rebuttal, Mr. Sonnenfeldt, who is 47 years old, denied leaking any secrets to anyone when he worked for the State Department from 1952 to 1969. He pointed out that he had been investigated once, exonerated and repeatedly promoted and given higher security clearances.

Mr. Otepka, his head bobbing with emotion, said he had processed "wiretap" and investigatory evidence on Mr. Sonnenfeldt in 1954 and 1955 making him "aware he leaked classified information to unauthorized persons."

Newsmen Named

He said these had included "representatives of The New York Times" as well as John Scali, then of The Associated Press, and Marvin Kalb, a radio correspondent. Mr. Otepka said his attempt to get action against Mr. Sonnenfeldt was defeated by higher-ups in 1955—"so once again, Mr. Sonnenfeldt was home safe."

Mr. Otepka asserted that the nominee rejected evidence against him in a face-to-face interview in 1959 and he added, "Any denial to me or before this committee is a gross falsehood."

Referring to a lie detector test of Mr. Sonnenfeldt in 1960, which he passed, Mr. Otepka testified: "Lie detector tests are of questionable validity."

He said that in 1960, further surveillance of Mr. Sonnenfeldt established that he had "communicated" with Senator Kennedy and the late Marguerite Higgins, then a correspondent of The New York Herald Tribune, but said he was no longer in a position to pursue the case.

Mr. Sonnenfeldt, a senior member of the National Security Council, coolly rejected Mr. Otepka's charges as inaccurate in terms of time and substance. He explained that he had been friendly with Miss Higgins since the end of the war and he had seen her afterward socially.

Mr. Otepka was the third witness to testify against Mr. Sonnenfeldt before the Senate committee since the first hearings last May 15.

The committee chairman, Senator Russell B. Long of Louisiana, is evidently determined to have the security issue cleared up. He has looked through Mr. Sonnenfeldt's Federal Bureau of Investigation record and said yesterday that there was "nothing supportive"

of the allegations against the nominee.

There was a flurry in the committee room as some of Mr. Sonnenfeldt's adversaries, including two former Foreign Service Officers, John Hemenway and Stephen A. Koczak, attempted to get Senator Long to discuss what they considered unfair press reports of the hearings, among them one in The New York Times.

Speaking agitatedly, first to Senator Long at the hearing

and after the hearing to reporters in the committee room, Mr. Koczak said that he had been misquoted and maligned in a report on yesterday's hearing. Mr. Koczak alleged that he had not testified as The New York Times reported that "the F.B.I. had distorted the record." He also denied that he was participating in a "campaign" against Mr. Sonnenfeldt, along with other witnesses.

The following remarks by

Mr. Koczak appear in the uncorrected transcript of yesterday's hearings.

"The issue is the way in which Europeans in the Department of State operate, the protectors they have. I mentioned earlier that the acting director of the F.B.I.—people would say that this is hearsay, well, he destroys records in the Watergate—the F.B.I. has destroyed other records."

Later, Mr. Koczak said Senator Long "has been misled,

perhaps been misled by the F.B.I."

"I want to repeat once again the director, the acting director himself, destroyed some documents so there are some people in the F.B.I. who are quite prepared to mislead you," he said.

Mr. Long, who had hoped to complete the hearings this week, said he intended to deal with all objections if necessary by examining State Department records on Mr. Son-

nenfeldt. The confirmation now seems assured.

Most of the two-and-one-half-hour session was taken up by Senator Harry F. Byrd, Independent of Virginia, who is apparently seeking to discredit Mr. Sonnenfeldt not on security grounds but on his qualifications for the Treasury post.

Querying Mr. Sonnenfeldt on taxation, monetary and trade policy, Senator Byrd said repeatedly: "I'm interested in your philosophy."