

Rusk Apology to Singapore Authentic, U.S. Admits

WASHINGTON (AP)—The State Department today acknowledged that Secretary of State Dean Rusk had written a letter of apology to Singapore's Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew for the "improper activities" of certain U.S. officials in Singapore.

Lee has said a \$3 million bribe had been offered to him by the U.S. government to keep quiet about the arrest of an American Central Intelligence Agency official from Bangkok who sought to buy secret information in Singapore.

In confirming the Rusk letter,

State Department press officer Robert J. McCloskey said that a formal denial made Tuesday by the State Department was in error.

McCloskey said that "those who were consulted within the government on this matter yesterday were not fully aware of the background of an incident that occurred 4½ years ago."

"The Secretary did write a letter expressing this government's regret over the incident," McCloskey said.

McCloskey refused to discuss the subject or comment further.

The letter from Rusk which Lee made public in a Singapore news conference after the state department denied his allegations, said that the administration of John F. Kennedy took a very serious view of the incident.

Rusk promised to "Review the activities of these officials for disciplinary action." The letter was dated April 15, 1961.

McCloskey refused to say what, if any, disciplinary action had resulted from the review. Nor would he say what diplomatic exchanges were under way in Singapore with the Lee government.

Other officials said that the U.S. government had considered the case closed after Rusk's letter was sent to Lee. There were no further exchanges on the matter until Lee told British and Australian newsmen at a televised news conference Monday that he doubted the wisdom of the U.S. government.

In another news conference yesterday Lee said that if the United States did not retract its denial of his original charge he would name the intermediary "who tried to bribe me."

Lee said the U.S. government

was "stupidly denying the undeniable."

"I have never lied publicly in my life," Lee said. "And whatever I say about the CIA I can prove. If they are stupid enough to go on denying this, we will have to reveal other details. It will do them no good, and it will not help future relations between us and the United States."

Lee said that if the U.S. government continued to deny the "incidents" he would have to name the intermediary of the U.S. government "who tried to

bribe me."

"He was a high ranking member of the U.S. government, and a lot of people will be embarrassed if I reveal his identify," Lee said.

He said the Singapore government still had tapes made of an attempt by the CIA to buy state information.

Lee told a news conference Tuesday that the tapes were made when a trap was laid for an agent, "and we will play them over Radio Singapore if the U.S. government persists," he said.

"If they were wise people, they would have known that the men in the Singapore government cannot be bought," Lee said.

"They have forced me to bring this out into the open. And if they continue to deny these incidents they will get themselves dragged further into the calumny."

The bribery allegation was made by Lee at Tuesday's news conference attended by four British and Australian foreign correspondents.

He said the bribe was offered

through a presidential intermediary in 1960. Dwight D. Eisenhower was president in 1960. The Kennedy administration, under which Rusk was appointed, began in January 1961.

Lee said he had offered to keep the incident quiet if the U.S. government gave Singapore \$33 million for economic development.