

Department of State To Sift F.B.I. Bids

By E. W. KENWORTHY
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WASHINGTON, March 24 — The State Department indicated today that it would henceforth decide on a case by case basis whether to honor requests by the Federal Bureau of Investigation for reports by United States embassies on the activities of Americans traveling abroad.

Robert J. McCloskey, State Department press officer, made it plain that this construction could be placed on a change in procedure governing such requests.

First, Mr. McCloskey said any request for reports coming from the F.B.I. or other investigatory agencies would have to be approved by the director of the department's Bureau of Security and Consular Affairs. Formerly the requests had been routinely passed on to embassies by Miss Frances G. Knight, head of the Passport Office.

Second, Mr. McCloskey said in response to questions that it was "entirely possible" that the bureau director, who is Miss Knight's immediate superior, would use his own judgment in transmitting the request.

Mr. McCloskey said that "sound judgment" should be applied in such matters, and he added that it was "debatable" whether it had always been applied in the past.

Senator Edward M. Kennedy, Democrat of Massachusetts, who yesterday strongly condemned the surveillance of United States citizens by embassy personnel, welcomed the State Department statement.

"The right to travel without harassment by our Government is a fundamental right of American citizenship," Mr. Kennedy declared. "The methods used in the past trenched heavily on this established right. I trust the department will take every step necessary to see that our citizens can travel with the guarantee of privacy."

The Hughes Case

The whole issue of the propriety of embassies' serving as surveillance and reporting agents for the F.B.I. arose as a result of the case of H. Stuart Hughes, professor of history at Harvard, who planned to travel in Europe next fall.

On March 8 an airgram sent in Miss Knight's name was sent to the Paris and Moscow embassies asking for reports on Professor Hughes's activities, on the ground that he "reportedly in the past has had strong convictions toward Communism."

When Philip B. Heymann, Acting Director of the Bureau of Security and Consular Affairs, learned of the airgram, he first had a conference with Miss Knight and later he sent her a memorandum, dated March 14.

Mr. Heymann instructed Miss Knight not to seek such information unless it was requested by investigatory agencies, and then only on clearance by the bureau director.

Requests Rescinded

On March 16 cables were sent to Paris and Moscow, at Mr. Heymann's direction, rescinding the earlier requests for reports on Professor Hughes.

Last Saturday Miss Knight denied any knowledge of the March 8 airgrams. She said they had been sent during her absence from the office.

On Tuesday a spokesman for

how many American travelers in the last year had been "preceded by advisory cables of their political opinions."

Mr. McCloskey said today that he was unable to say whether there was any legal authority for embassy reporting on United States citizens. He said, however, that he had been informed "by the Passport Office" that such requests from investigatory agencies had been passed on to embassies for the last 30 years.

He said further that, according to the Passport Office, the office had never acted on its own authority.



Associated Press

H. Stuart Hughes was ordered watched by Passport Office of State Department.

the State Department said Mr. Heymann had assumed that Miss Knight sent the airgrams on her own authority. After a check, the spokesman said, it was discovered that the F.B.I. had requested the information on Professor Hughes in a communication to the Passport Office on Feb. 6.

Furthermore, the spokesman said, Miss Knight's name had been signed by someone acting in her stead.

It was not made clear by State Department officials, however, why Mr. Heymann had sent the rescinding cables of March 16 on the assumption that Miss Knight had acted on her own, since she presumably had told him during their conference of the F.B.I. request of Feb. 6.

Kennedy's Questions

Yesterday Senator Kennedy wrote Secretary of State Dean Rusk asking him to say what was "the basis of authority" for such surveillance by embassies; who was assigned to survey the activities of citizens; how the information was gathered, and