

# Dean Rusk

**David Dean Rusk** KBE (February 9, 1909 – December 20, 1994) was the **United States Secretary of State** from 1961 to 1969 under presidents John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson. Rusk is one of the longest serving U.S. Secretaries of State, behind only Cordell Hull.

Born in Cherokee County, Georgia, Rusk taught at Mills College after graduating from Davidson College. During World War II, Rusk served as a staff officer in the China Burma India Theater. He was hired by the United States Department of State in 1945 and became Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs in 1950. In 1952, Rusk became president of the **Rockefeller Foundation**.

After winning the 1960 presidential election, Kennedy asked Rusk to serve as secretary of state. He supported diplomatic efforts during the **Cuban Missile Crisis** and, though he initially expressed doubts about the escalation of the U.S. role in the **Vietnam War**, became known as one of its strongest supporters. Rusk served for the duration of the Kennedy and Johnson administrations before retiring from public office in 1969. After leaving office, he taught international relations at the University of Georgia School of Law.

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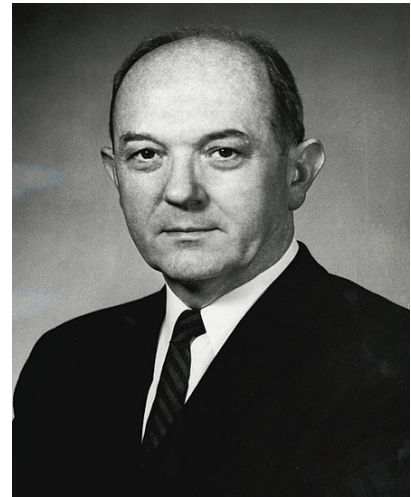
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## Childhood and education

David Dean Rusk was born in a rural district<sup>[1]</sup> of Cherokee County, Georgia, to Robert Hugh Rusk and Frances Elizabeth (née Clotfelter) Rusk.<sup>[2]</sup> Rusk's father worked as a sharecropper, an exploitative form of agriculture common in the South, and Rusk inherited a strong work ethic from his Presbyterian parents.<sup>[3]</sup> Owing to the extreme poverty in rural Georgia at the time, Rusk had to walk to school barefoot as shoes were too expensive for his parents to buy.<sup>[3]</sup> In his memoir

### Dean Rusk



#### 54th United States Secretary of State

##### In office

January 21, 1961 – January 20, 1969

**President** John F. Kennedy (1961-1963)  
Lyndon B. Johnson (1963-1969)

**Preceded by** Christian Herter

**Succeeded by** William P. Rogers

#### 2nd Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs

##### In office

March 28, 1950 – December 9, 1951

**President** Harry S. Truman

**Preceded by** William Walton Butterworth

**Succeeded by** John Moore Allison

#### 1st Assistant Secretary of State for International Organization Affairs

##### In office

February 8, 1949 – May 26, 1949

**President** Harry S. Truman

**Preceded by** Dean Acheson  
(Congressional Relations and International Conferences)

**Succeeded by** John D. Hickerson

#### Personal details

**Born** David Dean Rusk  
February 9, 1909  
Cherokee County, Georgia,  
U.S.

recounted to his son Rich in the 1980s (Rusk had gone blind by that point), he described a youth spent in "hardscrabble farming" as none of the families in Cherokee County had any modern amenities such as running water, central heating, indoor plumbing or electricity and where diseases were a constant threat.<sup>[4]</sup> Rusk's sister recalled that when the family killed a pig, they "ate everything but the squeal" while Rusk himself noted that "the Rusks who stayed in Cherokee County were eventually spewed out by this unforgiving land".<sup>[4]</sup> Clean drinking water was a rarity in Cherokee County while milk was a luxury, and as a result the young Rusk suffered from constant dental pain.<sup>[5]</sup> A slight improvement in the Rusk family's fortunes occurred in 1913 when his father was hired as a postman for Cherokee County, which allowed the elder Rusk sufficient income to afford to build an outhouse in place of the previous hole in the ground.<sup>[6]</sup> Rusk's mother's health was broken by her poor diet, farming and child-rearing.<sup>[7]</sup> For the young Rusk, his main consolation was the Presbyterian Church, and he came to embrace the stern Calvinist work ethic and morality.<sup>[4]</sup>

Like almost all white Southerners at the time, Rusk was a Democrat and his childhood **hero was President Woodrow Wilson**, the first Southern president since Andrew Johnson.<sup>[8]</sup> Unlike many other white Southerners, the experience of poverty made him sympathetic to black Americans as he noted during his childhood that the poverty of his black neighbors was worse than his white neighbors.<sup>[9]</sup> When the Rusk family moved to Atlanta to escape the poverty of Cherokee Country, he took a job at the age of 8 as an assistant at a local grocery store.<sup>[10]</sup> As a 9 year old, Rusk attended a rally in Atlanta hosted by Wilson urging the United States join the League of Nations.<sup>[8]</sup> Rusk grew up on the mythology and legends of the "**Lost Cause**" so common to the South, and he came to embrace the militarism of Southern culture as he wrote in a high school essay that "young men should prepare themselves for service in case our country ever got into trouble".<sup>[11]</sup> At the age of 12, Rusk had joined the ROTC, whose training duties he took very seriously.<sup>[12]</sup> Rusk had an intense reverence for the military and throughout his later career, he was much inclined to accept the advice of generals.<sup>[13]</sup>

He was educated in Atlanta's public schools, graduated from **Boys High School** in 1925,<sup>[14]</sup> and spent two years working for an Atlanta lawyer before working his way through Davidson College. Rusk was coached in football by William "Monk" Younger and was a member of the **Kappa Alpha Order Sigma** chapter,<sup>[15]</sup> and the national military honor society **Scabbard and Blade** becoming a Cadet Lieutenant Colonel commanding the **Reserve Officers' Training Corps** battalion. He graduated **Phi Beta Kappa** in 1931.<sup>[14]</sup> While at Davidson College, Rusk applied the Calvinist work ethic to his studies, and won a Rhodes Scholarship after graduation.<sup>[3]</sup> When asked in an interview for the **Rhodes Scholarship** why in the Seal of the U.S. the American eagle carried arrows in one claw and the olive branch of peace in the other, Rusk replied: "The two must go together. Armed force and world peace are two sides of the same coin".<sup>[8]</sup> The journalist Stanley Karnow described Rusk as being like a character from a Horatio Alger story, the boy who rose up from poverty of the rural South to high positions of power via his hard work, determination and intelligence.<sup>[3]</sup> Rusk's rise up from poverty made him into a passionate believer in the "**American Dream**", and a recurring theme throughout his life was his often expressed pride in his nation, a place that he believed that anyone, no matter how modest their circumstances, could rise up to live the "American Dream".<sup>[4]</sup>

While studying in England as a **Rhodes Scholar at St. John's College, Oxford**, he received the **Cecil Peace Prize** in 1933.<sup>[14][16]</sup> Rusk's experiences of the events of the early 1930s decisively shaped his later views as he told Karnow in an interview:

Died	December 20, 1994 (aged 85) <div>Athens, Georgia, U.S.</div>
Political party	Democratic
Spouse(s)	Virginia Foisie (m. 1937)
Children	3, including David
Education	Davidson College (BA) <div>St John's College, Oxford (BS, MA)</div> <div>University of California, Berkeley (LLB)</div>
Signature	<span></span> <i>Dean Rusk</i>
Military service	
Allegiance	<span><span><span></span></span><span> </span></span> United States
Branch/service	<span><span><span></span></span><span> </span></span> United States Army
Rank	<span></span> Colonel
Battles/wars	World War II
Awards	Legion of Merit



Dean Rusk with President Johnson and Robert McNamara, February 9, 1968

"I was a senior in college the year that the Japanese seized Manchuria and I have the picture still etched in my mind from the newsreel of the Chinese ambassador standing before the League of Nations, pleading for help against the Japanese attack. I myself was present in the Oxford Union on that night in 1933, when they passed the motion that "this house will not fight for king and country"... So one cannot have lived through those years and not have some pretty strong feelings...that it was the failure of the governments of the world to prevent aggression that made the catastrophe of World War II inevitable".<sup>[3]</sup>

Rusk married the former Virginia Foisie (October 5, 1915 – February 24, 1996) on June 9, 1937.<sup>[14]</sup> They had three children: David, Richard, and Peggy Rusk.<sup>[17]</sup>

Rusk taught at Mills College in Oakland, California, from 1934 to 1949 (except during his military service), and he earned an LL.B. degree at the University of California, Berkeley in 1940.

## Career prior to 1961

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During World War II, Rusk joined the infantry as a reserve captain and served as a staff officer in the China Burma India Theater. At war's end he was a colonel, decorated with the Legion of Merit with Oak Leaf Cluster.<sup>[14]</sup>

Rusk returned to America to work briefly for the War Department in Washington. He joined the Department of State in February 1945, and worked for the office of United Nations Affairs. In the same year, he suggested splitting Korea into spheres of U.S. and of Soviet influence at the 38th parallel north. After Alger Hiss left State in January 1947, Rusk succeeded him (as director of the Office of Special Political Affairs), according to Max Lowenthal.<sup>[18]</sup> In 1949, he was made Deputy Under Secretary of State. In 1950, Rusk was made Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs. He played an influential part in the US decision to become involved in the Korean War, and in Japan's postwar compensation for victorious countries, such as the Rusk documents. Rusk was a cautious diplomat and always sought international support.

When the question arose as to whether the United States should support France in maintaining control over Indochina against the Communist Viet Minh guerrillas, Rusk argued for support to the French government, stating that the Viet Minh were just the instruments of Soviet expansionism in Asia and to refuse to support the French would amount to appeasement.<sup>[3]</sup> Under strong American pressure, the French granted nominal independence to the State of Vietnam in February 1950 under the Emperor Bao Dai, which the United States recognized within days.<sup>[19]</sup> However, it was widely known that the State of Vietnam was still in effect a French colony as French officials controlled all of the important ministries and the Emperor bitterly remarked to the press: "What they call a Bao Dai solution turns out to be just a French solution".<sup>[20]</sup> In June 1950, Rusk testified before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee: "This is a civil war that has been in effect captured by the [Soviet] Politburo and, besides, has been turned into a tool of the Politburo. So it isn't a civil war in the usual sense. It is part of the international war...We have to look at in terms of which side we are on in this particular kind of struggle...Because Ho Chi Minh is tied with the Politburo, our policy is to support Bao Dai and the French in Indochina until we have time to help them establish a going concern".<sup>[3]</sup>

Rusk and his family moved to Scarsdale, New York, while he served as a Rockefeller Foundation trustee from 1950 to 1961.<sup>[21]</sup> In 1952 he succeeded Chester L. Barnard as president of the foundation.<sup>[14]</sup>

## Secretary of State

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On December 12, 1960, Democratic President-elect John F. Kennedy nominated Rusk to be secretary of state. Rusk was not Kennedy's first choice, but rather the "lowest common denominator", as Kennedy's first choice, J. William Fulbright, proved too controversial.<sup>[22]</sup> David Halberstam also described Rusk as "everybody's number two".<sup>[23]</sup> Rusk was sworn in on January 21, 1961.<sup>[14]</sup> Kennedy biographer Robert Dallek explained Rusk's choice thus:

By process of elimination, and determined to run foreign policy from the White House, Kennedy came to Dean Rusk, the president of the Rockefeller Foundation. Rusk was an acceptable last choice, with the right credentials and the right backers. A Rhodes scholar, a college professor, a World War II officer, an Assistant Secretary of State for the Far East under Truman, a liberal Georgian sympathetic to integration, and a consistent Stevenson supporter, Rusk offended no one. The foreign policy establishment — Acheson, Lovett, liberals Bowles and Stevenson, and the New York Times — all sang his praises. But most of all, it was clear to Kennedy from their one meeting in December 1960 that Rusk would be a sort of faceless, faithful bureaucrat who would serve rather than attempt to lead.<sup>[24]</sup>

Reflecting both his Southern pride and his sense of humor, Rusk when filling in the security form required of all public officials answered yes to the question asking if any of his relatives had tried to overthrow the U.S. government, listing his grandfathers who had served in the Confederate Army.<sup>[25]</sup> As secretary of state he believed in the use of military action to combat communism. Despite private misgivings about the Bay of Pigs invasion, he remained noncommittal during the executive council meetings leading up to the attack and never opposed it outright. Early in his tenure, he had strong doubts about US intervention in Vietnam,<sup>[26]</sup> but later his vigorous public defense of US actions in the Vietnam War made him a frequent target of anti-war protests. Just as had under the Truman administration, Rusk tended to favor hawkish line towards Vietnam and frequently allied himself in debates in the Cabinet and on the National Security Council with equally hawkish Defense Secretary Robert McNamara.<sup>[27]</sup>

In April 1961, when a proposal to send 100 more American military advisers to South Vietnam to make a total of 800 appeared before Kennedy, Rusk argued for acceptance even as he noted that it violated the Geneva Accords of 1954 (which had the United States had not signed, but promised to abide by), which limited the number of foreign military personnel in Vietnam to 700 at a time.<sup>[28]</sup> Rusk stated that International Control Commission consisting of diplomats from India, Poland and Canada which was supposed to enforce the Geneva Accords should not be informed of the deployment and the advisers "be placed in varied locations to avoid attention".<sup>[28]</sup> Outside of his work against communism, he continued his Rockefeller Foundation ideas of aid to developing nations and also supported low tariffs to encourage world trade. Rusk also drew the ire of supporters of Israel after he let it be known that he believed the USS Liberty incident was a deliberate attack on the ship, rather than an accident.

On March 24, 1961, Rusk released a brief statement saying his delegation was to travel to Bangkok and the SEATO nations' responsibility should be considered if peace settlements were not realized.<sup>[29]</sup> In 1961, Rusk disapproved of the Indian invasion of Goa, which he regarded as an act of aggression against NATO ally Portugal, but was overruled by Kennedy who wanted to improve relations with India and who also noted the Portuguese had no other option but to be allied to the United States.<sup>[30]</sup> Earlier in 1961, a major rebellion had broken out in the Portuguese colony of Angola, which increased Portugal's reliance upon its largest supplier of arms, the United States. In regards to the West New Guinea dispute about the Netherlands New Guinea, Rusk favored supporting the NATO ally Netherlands against Indonesia as he saw Sukarno as pro-Chinese.<sup>[31]</sup> Rusk accused Indonesia of aggression by attacking the Dutch forces in New Guinea in 1962 and believed that Sukarno had violated the United Nations charter, but was again overruled by Kennedy.<sup>[32]</sup> In a case of *realpolitik*, Kennedy argued the Dutch had no choice, but to be allied with the United States, meaning they could be taken for granted whereas he was highly concerned that Indonesia, which he called "the most significant nation in Southeast Asia", might become Communist.<sup>[33]</sup> To improve relations with Sukarno, Kennedy decided to support the Indonesian claim to Dutch New Guinea; Rusk later wrote he felt "queasy" about the way that Kennedy sacrificed the Dutch to win over Indonesia and had strong doubts that the "consultation" scheduled to determine the future of the territory in 1969 would be a free and fair one.<sup>[34]</sup>

President Nasser of Egypt was regarded as a trouble-maker in Washington owing to Egypt's alliance with the Soviet Union and his plans for a pan-Arab state that would of necessity require overthrowing the governments of every Arab state, most notably American allies such as Saudi Arabia.<sup>[35]</sup> In the Arab Cold War between Egypt and Saudi Arabia, Rusk favored the latter.<sup>[36]</sup> However, at the same time, Rusk argued to Kennedy to Nasser was a spoiler who wanted to play off the Soviet Union against the United States to get the best possible bargain for Egypt, and if he leaned in a pro-Soviet direction, it was because the United States refused to sell Egypt arms out of the fear that they might be used against Israel whereas the Soviets by contrast were willing to sell Egyptians any arms they wanted short of nuclear weapons.<sup>[37]</sup> Rusk noted the United States still had significant leverage over Egypt in the form of the PL 480 law that allowed the United States to sell surplus American agricultural production to any "friendly nation" in the local currency instead of U.S. dollars..<sup>[38]</sup> In Egypt, the government subsidized the sale of staple foods like

bread at cost or below cost prices, and Egypt's growing population, which outstripped the capacity of Egypt's agriculture, required Egypt to import food. Nasser had become very dependent upon the PL 480 food sales to provide food at cost to his people, and moreover the Soviet Union could not hope to match America's food sales to Egypt.<sup>[39]</sup> Nasser argued in exchange for PL 480 food sales that he would not start a war with Israel, saying for that for all his fiery speeches he promised to keep the Arab-Israeli dispute "in the icebox".<sup>[40]</sup> Rusk argued that to Kennedy and later Johnson that they should resist congressional pressure to end the PL 480 food sales to Egypt, stating that ending the PL 480 sales would only push Nasser closer to the Soviet Union and end the leverage that kept the peace between Egypt and Israel.<sup>[41]</sup> When Nasser sent 70, 000 Egyptian troops into Yemen in September 1962 to support the republican government against the royalist guerrillas supported by Saudi Arabia, Rusk approved of increased arm sales to Saudi Arabia, which were an indirect way of supporting the Yemeni royalists.<sup>[42]</sup> In common with decision-makers in Washington, Rusk felt that the United States had to support Saudi Arabia against Egypt, but he advised Kennedy against pushing Nasser too hard, saying that it would only drive him closer to the Soviet Union.<sup>[43]</sup> On 8 October 1962, a "Food for Peace" deal was signed with Egypt under the United States committed itself to sell at cost \$390 million worth of wheat to Egypt for the next three years.<sup>[44]</sup> By 1962, Egypt imported 50% of its wheat consumed from the United States and owing to the PL 480 law was some \$180 millions per year at time when Egypt's foreign reserves were almost deleted owing to a heavy level of military spending.<sup>[45]</sup>

During the Cuban Missile Crisis he supported diplomatic efforts. A careful review by Sheldon Stern, Head of the JFK Library, of Kennedy's audio recordings of the EXCOMM meetings suggests that Rusk's contributions to the discussions probably averted a nuclear war.<sup>[46]</sup>

In May 1963, out of anger at being trapped in the quagmire of fighting a guerrilla war in Yemen, Nasser ordered Egyptian Air Force squadrons in Yemen to start bombing towns in Saudi Arabia..<sup>[47]</sup> When Egypt and Saudi Arabia on the brink of war, Kennedy decided with the support of Rusk to throw America's weight on the side of Saudi Arabia.<sup>[48]</sup> Kennedy quietly dispatched several U.S Air Force squadrons to Saudi Arabia and warned Nasser that if he attacked Saudi Arabia, the United States would go to war with Egypt.<sup>[49]</sup> The American warning had its effect and Nasser decided that discretion was the better part of valor.<sup>[50]</sup> Despite all the tension in American-Egyptian relations, Rusk still argued that it was better to keep the PL 480 food sales to Egypt going than to end them, maintaining keeping the Arab-Israeli dispute "in the icebox" as Nasser phrased it depended upon the United States having leverage over Egypt.<sup>[51]</sup>

In August 1963, a series of misunderstandings rocked the Kennedy administration when in reaction to the Buddhist crisis a policy proposal urging the overthrow of President Diem of South Vietnam was presented to Kennedy who stated he would consider adopting it if Rusk gave his approval first.<sup>[52]</sup> Rusk who had gone to New York to attend a session of the United Nations cautiously gave approval out of the impression that Kennedy had approved it first.<sup>[52]</sup> When it emerged that was not the case, Kennedy assembled his foreign policy team for a stormy meeting at the White House with several such as McNamara, Vice President Lyndon Johnson, and CIA director John McCone all spoke for standing with Diem while others like the Undersecretary of State George Ball, W. Avrell Harriman and Roger Hilsman argued for deposing Diem.<sup>[52]</sup> Much to Kennedy's annoyance, Rusk maintained a stony silence, refusing to take a side.<sup>[52]</sup> At the end of the meeting, Kennedy exclaimed: "My God, my government is falling apart!"<sup>[52]</sup> On 31 August 1963, the diplomat Paul Kattenburg returned from Saigon where he reported that public opinion in South Vietnam was overwhelmingly hostile to Diem, which led him to suggest it was time for "for us to get out honorably".<sup>[53]</sup> All of the assembled officials rejected Kattenburg's idea with Rusk saying "we will not pull out...until the war is won".<sup>[53]</sup> Rusk reassigned Kattenburg from South Vietnam to Guyana.<sup>[53]</sup>

As he recalled in his autobiography, *As I Saw It*, Rusk did not have a good relationship with President Kennedy. The president was often irritated by Rusk's reticence in advisory sessions and felt that the State Department was "like a bowl of jelly" and that it "never comes up with any new ideas". Special counsel to the president Ted Sorensen believed that Kennedy, being well versed and practiced in foreign affairs, acted as his own secretary of state. Sorensen also said that the president often expressed impatience with Rusk and felt him under-prepared for emergency meetings and crises.<sup>[54]</sup> As Rusk recounted in his autobiography, he repeatedly offered his resignation, but it was never accepted.<sup>[55]</sup> Rumors of Rusk's dismissal leading up to the 1964 election abounded prior to President Kennedy's trip to Dallas in 1963. Shortly after Kennedy was assassinated, Rusk offered his resignation to the new president, Lyndon B. Johnson.<sup>[56]</sup> However, Johnson refused Rusk's resignation and retained him as the secretary of state throughout his administration.<sup>[56]</sup> When Lyndon B. Johnson died in 1973, Rusk eulogized the former president when he lay in state.<sup>[57]</sup>



L–R: Llewellyn Thompson, Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko and Rusk in 1967 during the Glassboro Summit Conference

Rusk quickly became one of Johnson's favorite advisers, and just before the Democratic National Convention the two had a discussion about Robert F. Kennedy, who was angling to be Johnson's running mate much to the president's discomfort.<sup>[58]</sup> Both Johnson and Rusk agreed that Kennedy was "freakishly ambitious" with an obsessive desire to be one day be president, no matter what. Rusk told Johnson: "Mr. President, I just can't wrap my mind around that kind of ambition. I don't know how to understand it".<sup>[59]</sup>

On August 29, 1964, amid the ongoing presidential election, Rusk called for bipartisan support to ensure that the US's foreign policy have both consistency and reliability and said Republican presidential nominee Barry Goldwater was creating "mischief".<sup>[60]</sup> The following month, at a September 10 press conference in the main auditorium of the State Department, Rusk said that Senator Goldwater's critiques "reflect a basic lack of understanding" of a U.S.

President's handling of conflict and peace.<sup>[61]</sup>

On 7 September 1964, Johnson assembled his national security team to seek a consensus about what to do about Vietnam.<sup>[62]</sup> Rusk advised caution, arguing that Johnson should embark on military measures only after diplomacy had been exhausted.<sup>[63]</sup> In September 1964, Rusk grew frustrated with the endless infighting amongst South Vietnam's junta of generals and after a failed coup d'etat against Nguyễn Khánh sent a message to Maxwell Taylor, the ambassador in Saigon, on 14 September stating he was to "make it emphatically clear" to Khánh and the rest of the junta that Johnson was tired of the infighting.<sup>[64]</sup> Rusk also instructed Taylor to say: "The United States has not provided massive assistance to South Vietnam, in military equipment, economic resources, and personnel in order to subsidize continuing quarrels among South Vietnamese leaders".<sup>[65]</sup> Reflecting the general vexation with South Vietnam's chronic political instability in Washington, Rusk argued to Johnson: "Somehow we must change the pace at which these people move, and I suspect that this can only be done with a pervasive intrusion of Americans into their affairs".<sup>[66]</sup> Increasingly, the feeling in Washington was if South Vietnam could not defeat the Viet Cong guerrillas on its own, the Americans would have to step in and win the war that the South Vietnamese had proved incapable of winning.<sup>[67]</sup> On September 21, Rusk said the US would not be pushed out of the Gulf of Tonkin and that the prevention of it becoming a "communist lake" would be assured by the continued presence of American forces there.<sup>[68]</sup>

In September 1964, a peace initiative was launched by the UN Secretary General U Thant who tried to set up secret peace talks in his native Burma, which were supported by the Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev who pressured Ho Chi Minh to take part in the projected peace talks, saying he would only increase Soviet aid to North Vietnam if the North Vietnamese took part in a diplomatic effort to end the war first.<sup>[69]</sup> U Thant reported to Rusk that the Soviet pressure seemed to be working as North Vietnam's other arms supplier, China, could not match the hi-tech weaponry that only the Soviet Union could supply.<sup>[70]</sup> Rusk did not press on this information on Johnson, saying to take part in the planned talks in Burma would have signaled "the acceptance or the confirmation of aggression".<sup>[71]</sup> In October, the peace initiative was ended by Khrushchev being ousted and his successor, Leonid Brezhnev, was not interested in U Thant's plan.<sup>[72]</sup>

On 23 December 1964, Nasser decided to up the ante in his relations with the United States by delivering a violently anti-American speech in Port Said in which called Iran "an American and Zionist colony" and claimed Johnson wanted to reduce Egypt down to the status of Iran.<sup>[73]</sup> Through Nasser was hoping that his speech might force the United States to reduce military aid to Saudi Arabia, it had the opposite effect. Johnson, who was more pro-Israeli than Kennedy had been, was furious with the speech. Rusk later recalled: "We didn't expect Nasser to bow, scrape, lick our boots, and say 'Thank you Uncle Sam', but we did expect to at least moderate his virulent criticism of the United States. Instead, he got up in front of those big crowds in Cairo and shouted such things as 'Throw your aid into the Red Sea!'"<sup>[74]</sup> On 5 January 1965, Johnson suspended all PL 480 aid to Egypt, an action that immediately plunged the Egyptian economy into a crisis.<sup>[75]</sup> Nasser realized what he had done and began to lobby for the resumption of PL 480 food sales, but got nowhere.<sup>[76]</sup> Through Nasser knew the best way of ending the crisis was to pull out of Yemen and seek a rapprochement with Saudi Arabia and the United States, he instead turned towards the Soviet Union to seek support for the rapidly contracting Egyptian economy.<sup>[77]</sup>

On March 19, 1965, Rusk commented that Russia was appearing "disinclined to put its full weight behind" international agreements on Vietnam and Laos during a press conference.<sup>[78]</sup> In April 1965, Senator Kennedy during a visit to the White House advised Johnson to sack Rusk and replace him with Bill Moyers.<sup>[79]</sup> Johnson at first thought this was a joke, saying that Kennedy's brother had him appointed him Secretary of State, and was astonished to learn that Kennedy was serious. The president replied: "I like Bill Moyers, but I'm not about to remove Rusk".<sup>[80]</sup>

In May 1965, Rusk told Johnson that the "Four Points" presented by the North Vietnam premier Dong as peace terms were deceptive because "the third of those four points required the imposition of the National Liberation Front on all South Vietnam".<sup>[81]</sup> In June 1965, when General William Westmoreland requested of Johnson 180, 000 troops to Vietnam, Rusk argued to Johnson that the United States had to fight in Vietnam to maintain "the integrity of the U.S. commitment" throughout the world, but also wondered aloud if Westmoreland was exaggerating the extent of the problems in South Vietnam in order to have more troops under his command.<sup>[82]</sup> Rusk came into conflict with his undersecretary of state, George Ball, about Vietnam. When Ball argued the governing duumvirate of Thieu and Ky in South South were "clowns" unworthy of American support, Rusk replied: "Don't give me that stuff. You don't understand that at the time of Korea we had to go out and dig up Syngman Rhee out of the bush where he was hiding. There was no government in Korea, either. We're going to get some breaks, and this thing is going to work".<sup>[83]</sup>

In 1964 and again in 1965, Rusk approached the British Prime Minister Harold Wilson to ask for British troops to go to Vietnam, requests that were refused. The normally Anglophile Rusk saw the refusal as a "betrayal".<sup>[84]</sup> Rusk told Louis Heren, the American correspondent for the *Times* of London: "All we needed was just one regiment. The Black Watch would have done it. Just one regiment, but you wouldn't. Well, don't expect us to save you again. They can invade Sussex and we won't do a damn thing about it".<sup>[85]</sup> Shortly before his death, Adlai Stevenson, the American ambassador to the UN, mentioned in an interview with the journalist Eric Sevareid the aborted peace terms in Rangoon in 1964, saying the UN Secretary General U Thant was disappointed that Rusk had rejected the terms.<sup>[86]</sup> When Johnson asked Rusk about the matter, the latter replied that in diplomacy "there is a difference between rejecting a proposal and not accepting it", a distinction that maintained that U Thant had missed.<sup>[87]</sup>

In December 1965, when McNamara first told Johnson that the "military action approach is an unacceptable way to a successful conclusion" and urged him to pause the bombing of North Vietnam, Rusk advised the president that there was only a 1 in 20 chance that a bombing pause would lead to peace talks.<sup>[88]</sup> However, Rusk argued for the bombing pause, saying "You must think about the morale of the American people if the other side keeps pushing. We must be able to say that all has been done".<sup>[89]</sup> When Johnson announced the bombing pause on Christmas Day 1965, Rusk told the press "We have put everything into the basket of peace except the surrender of South Vietnam".<sup>[90]</sup> On 28 December 1965, Rusk sent a cable to Henry Cabot Lodge Jr, the ambassador in Saigon, presenting the bombing pause as merely a cynical exercise in public relations as he wrote: "The prospect of large-scale reinforcements in men and defense budget increases for the next eighteen-month period requires solid preparation of the American public. A crucial element will be a clear demonstration that we have explored fully every alternative but the aggressors has left us no choice".<sup>[91]</sup> Rusk ordered Henry A. Byroade, the ambassador in Rangoon, to make contact with the North Vietnamese ambassador to Burma with the offer that the bombing pause might be extended if North Vietnam made "a serious contribution to peace".<sup>[92]</sup> The offer was rejected as the North Vietnamese refused to open peace talks until the bombing raids were stopped "unconditionally and for good".<sup>[93]</sup> In January 1966, Johnson ordered the Rolling Thunder bombing raids to resume.<sup>[94]</sup>

After President of France Charles de Gaulle withdrew France from the common NATO military command in February 1966 and ordered all American military forces to leave France, President Johnson asked Rusk to seek further clarification from President de Gaulle by asking whether the bodies of buried American soldiers must leave France as well.<sup>[95]</sup> Rusk recorded in his autobiography that de Gaulle did not respond when asked, "Does your order include the bodies of American soldiers in France's cemeteries?"<sup>[96][97]</sup>

In February 1966, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee chaired by Fulbright held hearings on the Vietnam War and Fulbright had called as expert witnesses George F. Kennan and General James Gavin, who were both critical of the Vietnam War.<sup>[98]</sup> Rusk who served as Johnson's principle spokesman on Vietnam was sent by the president together with General Maxwell Taylor to serve as his rebuttal witnesses before the Foreign Relations Committee.<sup>[99]</sup> Rusk testified that the war was a morally justified struggle to halt "the steady extension of Communist power

through force and threat".<sup>[100]</sup> Karnow wrote the televised hearings were a compelling "political theater" as Fulbright and Rusk verbally dueled about the merits of the Vietnam war with both men pouncing on any weaknesses in the other's argument.<sup>[101]</sup>

By 1966, the Johnson administration had become divided between the "hawks" and the "doves", through the latter term was somewhat misleading as the "doves" within the administration merely favored opening peace talks to end the war as opposed to pulling out U.S forces from Vietnam.<sup>[102]</sup> Rusk together with the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Earle "Bus" Wheeler and the National Security Adviser Walt Whitman Rostow were the leading "hawks" while the leading "doves" was Rusk's former ally McNamara together with Harriman.<sup>[103]</sup> Rusk equated withdrawal from Vietnam as "appeasement", through at times he was willing to advise Johnson to open peace talks as a way to rebut domestic criticism that Johnson was unwilling to consider alternative ways to end the war.<sup>[104]</sup>

On April 18, 1967, during a speech in Washington in regards to ending the conflict in South Vietnam, Rusk said the United States was prepared to "take steps to deescalate the conflict whenever we are assured that the north will take appropriate corresponding steps."<sup>[105]</sup> Rusk's support for the Vietnam War caused considerable torment for his son Richard who was opposed to the war, but enlisted in the Marine Corps and refused to attend anti-war demonstrations out of love for his father.<sup>[106]</sup> The psychological strain caused the younger Rusk to suffer a nervous breakdown and led to a break between father and son.<sup>[8]</sup>

Rusk planned to offer to resign in the summer of 1967, because "his daughter planned to marry a black classmate at Stanford University, and he could not impose such a political burden on the president"<sup>[107]</sup> after it became known that his daughter, Peggy, planned to marry Guy Smith,<sup>[108]</sup> "a black Georgetown grad working at NASA".<sup>[109]</sup> In fact, the *Richmond News Leader* stated that it found the wedding offensive, further saying that "anything which diminishes [Rusk's] personal acceptability is an affair of state".<sup>[1]</sup> (<http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,943987,00.html>) He decided not to resign after talking first to Robert S. McNamara and Lyndon Johnson.<sup>[110]</sup> A year after his daughter's wedding, Rusk was invited to join the faculty of the University of Georgia Law School, only to have his appointment denounced by Roy Harris, an ally of Alabama Governor George Wallace and a member of the university's board of regents, who stated that his opposition was because of Peggy Rusk's interracial marriage. The university nonetheless appointed Rusk to the position.<sup>[108]</sup>

When Johnson first discussed dropping out of the 1968 election at a National Security Council meeting in September 1967, Rusk was opposed, saying: "You must not go down. You are the Commander-in-chief, and we are in war. This would have a very serious effect on the country".<sup>[111]</sup> When McNamara advised Johnson in October 1967 to agree to North Vietnam's demand that the United States cease the bombing campaign as the precondition for opening peace talks, Rusk opposed the idea of a "bombing pause" as removing the "incentive for peace", and urged Johnson to continue Operation Rolling Thunder.<sup>[112]</sup> By this time, many at the State Department were concerned by Rusk's drinking on the job with William Bundy later saying that Rusk was a like a "zombie" until he started to drink.<sup>[113]</sup> McNamara was shocked when he visited him at Foggy Bottom in the afternoon and saw Rusk open his desk to pull out a bottle of scotch which he proceeded to drink in its entirety.<sup>[114]</sup> Unlike the abrasive McNamara who was widely disliked at the Pentagon, Rusk was sufficiently liked by his colleagues in the State Department that none leaked their concerns about his drinking to the media.<sup>[115]</sup>

On January 5, 1968, notes by Rusk were delivered to Ambassador of the Soviet Union to the United States Anatoly Dobrynin, pleading support from the US to "avoid recurrence of" claimed bombing of Russian cargo ships in the Haiphong North Vietnam port the day prior.<sup>[116]</sup> On February 9, Rusk was asked by Senator William Fulbright over his possible information in regards to a US tactical nuclear weapons introduction in South Vietnam report.<sup>[117]</sup>

Like other members of the Johnson administration, Rusk was shaken by the surprise of the Tet Offensive.<sup>[118]</sup> During a news briefing at the height of the Tet Offensive, Rusk who was known for his courteous manner, was asked how the Johnson administration was taken by surprise, causing him to snap in fury: "Whose side are you on? Now, I'm the Secretary of State of the United States, and I'm on our side! None of your papers or your broadcasting apparatuses are worth a damn unless the United States succeeds. They are trivial compared to that question. So I don't know why people have to be probing for things that one can bitch about, when there are two thousand stories on the same day about things that are more constructive".<sup>[119]</sup> However, despite his rage at the media whom he felt were misrepresenting the war, he admitted to finding signs that public opinion was shifting against the war. He later recalled that during a visit to Cherokee County in February 1968 that people were telling him: "Dean if you can't tell us when this war is going to end, well then maybe we just ought to chuck it".<sup>[120]</sup> Rusk added "The fact was that we



could not, in any good faith, tell them".<sup>[121]</sup> Shortly afterwards, in March 1968 Rusk appeared as a witness before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee chaired by Fulbright that was examining allegations that the Johnson administration had been dishonest about the Gulf of Tonkin incident in 1964.<sup>[122]</sup> Through Rusk handled well himself under the relentless questioning by Fulbright, the televised hearings were another blow to the prestige of the Johnson administration as it became very apparent to the viewers that a number of senators were now opposed to the war or were only lukewarm in their support.<sup>[123]</sup>

On April 17, during an American Society of Newspaper Editors luncheon meeting, Rusk admitted that the United States has taken "some lumps" propaganda wise but the Johnson administration should persist in trying to find a location of neutrality for the peace talks to occur.<sup>[124]</sup> The following day, Rusk added 10 sites to the 5 proposed initially, accusing Hanoi of having a propaganda battle over neutral areas for discussion during a press conference.<sup>[125]</sup>

On June 26, Rusk assured Berlin citizens that the United States along with its North Atlantic Treaty partners were "determined" in securing Berlin's liberty and security, additionally criticizing the recent travel restrictions of East Germany as violating "long standing agreements and practice."<sup>[126]</sup>

On September 30, Rusk met privately with Foreign Minister of Israel Abba Eban in New York City for discussion on peace plans from the Middle East.<sup>[127]</sup>

On November 1, Rusk said long term allies of the North Vietnam bomb halt should pressure Hanoi to accelerate their involvement in the peace talks in Paris.<sup>[128]</sup>

On December 1, citing the halt of bombing in North Vietnam, Rusk said that the Soviet Union would need to come forward and do what it could to forward peace talks in southeast Asia.<sup>[129]</sup> On December 22, Rusk appeared on television to officially confirm the 82 surviving crew members of the USS *Pueblo* intelligence ship, speaking on behalf of the hospitalized President Johnson.<sup>[130]</sup>

January 2, Rusk met with five Jewish American leaders in his office to assure them the US had not changed its policy in the Middle East recognizing the sovereignty of Israel, one of the leaders, the American-Israeli Public Affairs committee's Irving Kane, saying afterward that Rusk had successfully convinced him.<sup>[131]</sup>

## Retirement

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On July 27, 1969, Rusk voiced his support for the Nixon administration's proposed anti-ballistic missile system, saying that he would vote for it, were he a senator, from an understanding that further proposals would be reviewed if any progress would be made in Soviet Union peace talks.<sup>[132]</sup> The same year, Rusk received both the Sylvanus Thayer Award and the Presidential Medal of Freedom, with Distinction.

Following his retirement, he taught international law at the University of Georgia School of Law in Athens, Georgia (1970–1984). Rusk was emotionally exhausted after 8 years as Secretary of State and narrowly survived a nervous breakdown in 1969.<sup>[8]</sup> Rusk found that the return to teaching in 1970 to resume the academic career he had abandoned in 1940 to be emotionally satisfying as the other professors remembered him as being like a "junior associate seeking tenure".<sup>[8]</sup> Rusk told his son "the students I was privileged to teach helped rejuvenate my life and make a new start after those hard years in Washington".<sup>[8]</sup> In the 1970s, he was a member of the Committee on Present Danger, a hawkish group opposed to détente with the Soviet Union and distrustful of treaties to control the nuclear arms race.<sup>[133]</sup> In 1984, Rusk's son Richard, whom he had not spoken to since 1970 owing to the opposition of Rusk *films* to the Vietnam War, surprised his father by returning to Georgia from Alaska to seek a reconciliation.<sup>[134]</sup> As part of the reconciliation process, Rusk who had gone blind by this point, agreed to dictate his memoirs to his son who recorded what he said and wrote it down into what became the book *As I Saw It*.<sup>[134]</sup>

In a review of his memoir *As I Saw It*, the American historian Warren Cohen noted little of the acrimony of his relations with McNamara, Bundy and Fulbright appeared, but that Rusk was unremitting hostile in his picture of Kennedy's closest adviser and right-hand man, his younger brother Robert together with the UN Secretary General U Thant.<sup>[135]</sup> In *As I Saw It*, Rusk expressed considerable anger at the media's coverage of the Vietnam War, accusing anti-war journalists of "faking" stories and images that portrayed the war in an unflattering light.<sup>[135]</sup> Rusk

spoke about he called the "so-called freedom of the press" as he maintained that journalists from *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* only wrote what their editors told them to write, saying if there was true freedom of the press that both newspapers would have portrayed the war more positively.<sup>[135]</sup> Despite his hawkish views towards the Soviet Union, Rusk stated during his time as Secretary of State that he never saw any evidence that the Soviet Union planned to invade Western Europe and he "seriously doubted" that it ever would.<sup>[135]</sup> Cohen noted that in contrast to Kennedy that Rusk was more warmer and protective towards Johnson, whom he clearly got on better with than he ever did with Kennedy.<sup>[136]</sup> In a review of *As I Saw It*, the historian George C. Herring wrote that the book was mostly dull and uninformative when it came to Rusk's time as Secretary of State, telling little that historians did not already know, and the most interesting and passionate parts concerned his youth in the "Old South" and his conflict with and reconciliation with his son Richard.<sup>[137]</sup> He died of heart failure in Athens, Georgia on December 20, 1994, at the age of 85.<sup>[138]</sup> He and his wife are buried at the Oconee Hill Cemetery in Athens.

Rusk Eating House, the first women's eating house at Davidson College, was founded in 1977 and is named in his honor. The Dean Rusk International Studies Program at Davidson College is also named in his honor.

Dean Rusk Middle School, located in Canton, Georgia, was named in his honor, as was Dean Rusk Hall on the campus of the University of Georgia.

## Legacy

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The consensus of historians is that Rusk was a very intelligent man, but very shy and so deeply immersed in details and the complexities of each case, that he was reluctant to make a decision, and unable to clearly explain to the media what the government's policies were.<sup>[139]</sup> Jonathan Coleman says that he was deeply involved in Berlin Crisis, the Cuban Missile Crisis, NATO, and Vietnam. Typically he was highly cautious on most issues, except for Vietnam:

He established only a distant relationship with President Kennedy but worked more closely with President Johnson. Both presidents appreciated his loyalty and his low-key style. Although an indefatigable worker, Rusk exhibited little talent as a manager of the Department of State.<sup>[140]</sup>

Regarding Vietnam, historians agree that President Johnson relied heavily on the advice of Rusk, Defense Secretary Robert McNamara, and national security adviser McGeorge Bundy to the effect that a communist takeover of all of Vietnam was unacceptable, and the only way to prevent it was to escalate America's commitment. Johnson took their conclusions and rejected dissenting views.<sup>[141]</sup>

Rusk's son Rich wrote about his father's time as Secretary of State: "With this reticent, reserved, self-contained, emotionally bound-up father of mine from rural Georgia, how could the decision making have gone any differently? His taciturn qualities, which served him so well in negotiating with the Russians, ill-prepared him for the wrenching, introspective, soul-shattering journey that a true reappraisal of Vietnam policy would have involved. Although trained for high office, he was unprepared for such a journey, for admitting that thousands of American lives, and hundreds of thousands of Vietnamese, might have been lost in vain".<sup>[136]</sup>

George Herring wrote about Rusk in 1992: "He is a man utterly without pretense, a thoroughly decent individual, a man of stern countenance and unbending principles. He is a man with a passion for secrecy. He is a shy and reticent man, who as Secretary of State sipped scotch to loosen his tongue for press conferences. Stolid and normally laconic, he also has a keen, dry wit. He has often been described as the "perfect number two," a loyal subordinate who had strong- if unexpressed-reservations about the Bay of Pigs operation, but after its failure could defend it as though he had planned it".<sup>[142]</sup>

Summarizing the views of historians and political scientists, Smith Simpson states:

Here was a man who had much going for him but failed in crucial respects. A decent, intelligent, well-educated man of broad experience in world affairs who, early in life, evidenced qualities of leadership, seemed diffidently to hold back rather than to lead as secretary of state, seeming to behave, in important ways, like a sleeve-plucking follower of presidents rather than their wise and persuasive counselor.<sup>[143]</sup>

## Media

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## Appearances

- *Cuban Missile Crisis Revisited*. Produced for The Idea Channel by the Free to Choose Network, 1983.
  - Phase I (U1015) (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E2WIoHNI8eI>) (January 22, 1983)
    - Featuring Dean Rusk, McGeorge Bundy, Richard Neustadt, Edwin Martin & Donald Wilson in Atlanta, Georgia.

## Portrayal in media

- Actor Henry Strozier played Secretary Rusk in *Thirteen Days*, a 2000 American historical thriller film directed by Roger Donaldson, dramatizing the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962.

## Publications

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- "U.S. Foreign Policy: A Discussion with Former Secretaries of State Dean Rusk, William P. Rogers, Cyrus R. Vance, and Alexander M. Haig, Jr." (<https://www.jstor.org/stable/44234902>). *International Studies Notes*, Vol. 11, No. 1, *Special Edition: The Secretaries of State*, Fall 1984. JSTOR 44234902 (<https://www.jstor.org/stable/44234902>) (pp. 10-20)

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## External links

- [Dean Rusk Oral History Collection, from the Richard B. Russell Library](http://russelldoc.galib.uga.edu/russell/view?docId=ead/RBRL214DROH-ead.xml) (<http://russelldoc.galib.uga.edu/russell/view?docId=ead/RBRL214DROH-ead.xml>)
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- [Oral History Interviews with Dean Rusk, from the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library](https://web.archive.org/web/20100611125739/http://www.lbjlib.utexas.edu/johnson/archives.hom/oralhistory.hom/rusk/rusk.asp) (<https://web.archive.org/web/20100611125739/http://www.lbjlib.utexas.edu/johnson/archives.hom/oralhistory.hom/rusk/rusk.asp>)
- A film clip "Longines Chronoscope with Dean Rusk" (<https://archive.org/details/gov.archives.arc.95908>) is available at the [Internet Archive](https://archive.org/details/gov.archives.arc.95908)
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