

Panel: Helms Knew of Illegality

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WASHINGTON — Some former officials, including onetime Director Richard Helms, directed domestic intelligence programs they knew to be illegal, according to documents cited in the Rockefeller Commission report.

Helms was so concerned about possible disclosure of the CIA's illegal monitoring of mail that he once had warned that the monitoring should be discontinued "if there were even a suspicion of a leak," the commission reported.

In Congressional testimony and in public statements Helms, now the U. S.

Ambassador to Iran, has denied knowledge of illegal CIA activities.

The commission also reported that Helms himself raised the question of the impropriety of a CIA report on domestic student radicalism prepared in 1968 under his direction.

The CIA charter restricts the agency from conducting domestic intelligence operations in most instances.

The report on radicalism was prepared as part of Operation Chaos, an activity the CIA began in August, 1967 in response to requests by President Johnson for the CIA to determine the extent of foreign influence on domestic dissidence, the

commission reported.

A copy of the report, entitled "Restless Youth," initially was delivered to Johnson and Walt W. Rostow, the President's special assistant for national security affairs.

A covering memo from Helms, dated Sept. 4, 1968, stated, "You will, of course, be aware of the peculiar sensitivity which attaches to the fact that CIA has prepared a report on student activities both here and abroad."

Another copy of the report was delivered on Feb. 18, 1969, after the change in administrations, to Henry Kissinger, then assistant to President Nixon for national

security affairs.

The Rockefeller Commission, noting that Helms "specifically pointed out the impropriety of the CIA's involvement in the study," quoted a cover memo from Helms to Kissinger:

"In an effort to round out our discussion of this subject, we have included a section on American students. This is an area not within the charter of this agency, So I need not emphasize how extremely sensitive this makes the paper. Should anyone learn of its existence it would prove most embarrassing for all concerned."

Operation CHAOS continued to grow and eventually accumulated 13,000 files.

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