

POISON ARMS BAN IS CITED BY HELMS

He Tells Panel He Gave Oral
Order to Halt C.I.A. Job,
but Did Not Follow Up

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WASHINGTON, Sept. 17—

Richard Helms, the former Director of Central Intelligence, told a Senate committee today that he had issued an oral command to halt the C.I.A.'s biochemical weapons program and to destroy its stockpiles, but that he had never followed up to find out if his order had been carried out. He also testified that he had never issued a written order on the matter.

Mr. Helms, now the Ambassador to Iran, went before the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence accompanied by Thomas Karamessines, his former deputy for covert operations. Mr. Helms told the committee that when he learned in February, 1970, of President Nixon's order that all biochemical weapons be destroyed, he and Mr. Karamessines agreed that the C.I.A. "had no choice but to comply." "We agreed to terminate the program," he

said.

Mr. Karamessines told the committee that he and Mr. Helms discussed the matter with Dr. Sidney Gottlieb, the director of the Technical Services Division of the C.I.A., which had over-all control of the program. Mr. Karamessines said that it was his "understanding with Gottlieb that all toxins in possession of the agency were returned to Fort Detrick for destruction."

2d Day of Hearings

Mr. Helms and Mr. Karamessines appeared as witnesses in the second day of the Senate Committee's public inquiry into why the C.I.A. failed to destroy two deadly biochemical poisons, a shellfish toxin and a poison derived from cobra venom, after the Presidential order in 1970.

The committee's counsel, F.A.O. Schwarz 3d, said that the committee would question Dr. Gottlieb about the poisons and other matters in a closed session on Tuesday. He said, however, that Dr. Gottlieb's lawyers had "indicated" that their client might invoke his constitutional right under the Fifth Amendment not to answer questions that might tend to incriminate him.

If Dr. Gottlieb does invoke the amendment, Mr. Schwarz said, the committee may consider whether it is appropriate to