

Former CIA Chief Helms Won't Tell Why He Thinks Nixon Eased Him Out

By JAMES McCARTNEY

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WASHINGTON. — Richard Helms, eased out recently as head of the CIA, continued Monday to abide by the code of spies: He kept his mouth shut.

Appearing before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, with a chance to tell all, Helms said he didn't intend to start talking now.

"I think if I should talk, it would be a bad example for those still in the agency," he

said.

HELMS, who worked for the CIA for 26 years, 6½ as chief, was making his first public appearance before a Congressional committee. The occasion was a confirmation hearing for his new post, Ambassador to Iran.

President Nixon has given no explanation for firing Helms and replacing him with James Schlesinger, former budget expert at the White House and more re-



RICHARD HELMS
... eased out

cently, head of the Atomic Energy Commission.

THERE HAS BEEN speculation that Helms was removed because the White House was unhappy with his independence. Some believe the Nixon Administration wanted reports more in keeping—or supportive—of its policies.

No one on the Foreign Relations Committee asked Helms about his dismissal, but reporters questioned him later.

"That is cocktail party chatter," he replied. "The CIA has established a tradition of fair and honest reporting. Presidents know that and all Presidents appreciate the need for that."

DOES HE THINK that tradition is now threatened?

"I don't know. We'll have to wait and see."

Helms did say, in response to a question from committee chairman Sen. J. William Fulbright (D., Ark.) that the CIA had nothing to do with the Watergate affair.

"I have no control over anyone who left," he said, referring to E. Howard Hunt Jr. and James W. McCord Jr., two former CIA agents who participated in the Watergate caper.

HELMS ALSO SAID the CIA had not cooperated with International Telephone and Telegraph Corp. (ITT) for "espionage purposes" in Chile — as suggested last year in stories by columnist Jack Anderson. Anderson's articles were based on papers obtained from ITT files.

Helms said the CIA had the same kind of creations with many corporations overseas as it had with ITT in Chile. He said the relationships were for "exchanging information."

He seemed amused by questions concerning his new appointment. "Mr. Chairman," he said to Fulbright at one point, "you know as much about Iran as I do."