



William E. Colby (right), the director of central intelligence, and Richard M. Helms, a former director, appear before the Senate Armed Services Committee. Senator

Howard W. Cannon (D., Nev.), facing away, was among their questioners. The panel is looking into domestic Central Intelligence Agency spying. AP

CIA's U.S. activity laid to foreign involvement

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Washington (AP) — The Central Intelligence Agency opened an office to evaluate information on American radical groups "only when evidence appeared of their involvement with subversive elements abroad," Richard M. Helms, a former director of the Agency, said yesterday.

Mr. Helms said recent criticism of the agency is irresponsible and has distorted the facts. He denied the CIA under his direction ever engaged in any massive illegal domestic spying.

Sources on the Senate Armed

Services intelligence subcommittee said Mr. Helms minimized the extent of CIA infiltration of domestic dissident groups far more than has William E. Colby, the current director of central intelligence.

In testimony made public Wednesday, Mr. Colby said 12 CIA agents infiltrated various groups and created files on about 10,000 Americans.

The committee source quoted Mr. Helms as saying some of the penetration consisted of sending CIA employees to rallies and demonstrations.

Mr. Helms and Mr. Colby

testified in private, but in a publicly released statement, Mr. Helms said the controversy is endangering national security and is based on "ruinous misunderstandings" by some in the press.

"In normal times few Americans would ever come within the purview of our foreign intelligence operations," Mr. Helms said.

"That happened only when evidence appeared of their involvement with subversive elements abroad."

He said such involvement was infrequent until in the late

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CIA domestic activity is laid to overseas threat

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1950's and early 1960's there was "a sudden and quite dramatic upsurge of extreme radicalism in this country and abroad, an uprush of violence against authority and institution, and the advocacy of violent change in our system of government."

Generally, that violence would have been of no direct concern to the CIA, Mr. Helms said.

"It became, so only to the degree that the trouble was inspired by, a coordinated with or funded by anti-American subversion mechanisms abroad," he said.

"Information was indeed developed, largely by the FBI and the Department of Justice but also from foreign sources as well, that the agitation here did in fact have some overseas connections.

"As the work load grew, a very small group within the already small counterintelligence staff was formed to analyze the information developed here and to give guidance to our facilities abroad," he said. "The charter of this group was specifically restricted to the foreign field."

No resemblance

Mr. Helms said the facts bear no resemblance to allegations made against the CIA.

"The principal allegations remain unsupported and, to the contrary, have been undermined by contrary evidence identified by the press itself.

"Yet these allegations, picked up and carried to the

four corners of the earth, have brought undeserved embarrassment and humiliation to the patriotic men and women of the Central Intelligence Agency, and they seriously damage, at least temporarily, the function the agency is charged with performing in the national interest." Meanwhile, Senator Howard W. Cannon (D., Nev.) said he believes Seymour Hersh, a New York Times writer, should be called as a witness and questioned under oath.

Senator Cannon said he was not suggesting that Mr. Hersh, who first reported the CIA domestic spying, be asked to name his sources.

"For specifics"

"I just want to press him for specifics," Senator Cannon said. Senator John C. Stennis, the chairman of the Armed Forces Committee, said he is uncertain when hearings will resume or what witnesses will be called.

But committee sources said the next witnesses probably will be James J. Angleton, the former head of CIA counterintelligence, and Richard Ober, now with the National Security Council, who headed the office that assigned the 12 agents to United States "dissident groups."

In another development, the FBI said it has no record of a 1971-1972 plot to kill Spiro T. Agnew, who was then Vice President, and kidnap Mr. Helms, then the CIA director.

The plot was disclosed in Mr. Colby's testimony before a Senate Appropriations Commit-

tee unit Wednesday. He said the FBI and the Secret Service were informed.

In the Senate, Senators Gaylord Nelson (D., Wis.), Henry M. Jackson (D., Wash.) and

Edmund S. Muskie (D., Maine) reintroduced legislation to create a bipartisan joint congressional committee to oversee all government surveillance activities inside the U.S.

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