

Helms Insults Newsman, Denies Plots

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Former Central Intelligence Agency Director Richard Helms angrily denied yesterday that the agency was responsible for any foreign assassinations and vented his personal bitterness toward a CBS television correspondent.

Helms, now U. S. ambassador to Iran, displayed his strong resentment when he emerged from 3½ hours of private questioning by the Rockefeller Commission, which is investigating alleged domestic transgressions by the CIA.

CBS correspondent Daniel Schorr, who has broadcast several stories on CIA involvement with assassination plots, was waiting outside the hearing room with other reporters.

When Schorr extended his hand, Helms brushed him aside and uttered several insults, "son-of-a-bitch", "killer Schorr" and a sexual epithet.

Standing before TV cameras a few moments later, Helms made it clear that he found the subject of assassinations

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the main irritant. When Schorr asked if the commission had questioned him about those allegations, Helms replied:

"I must say, Mr. Schorr, I don't like what you said on some of your broadcasts on this subject. I don't think it was fair and I don't think it was right. As far as I know, the CIA was never responsible for assassinating any foreign leader."

Schorr did not report that the CIA had carried out assassinations of foreign leaders, but that the White House was concerned about possible agency involvement in assassination plots.

Another reporter asked if there had been any discussions within the CIA of launching an assassination attempt. Helms' oblique reply suggested that there had.

"I don't know whether I stopped beating my wife or you stopped beating your wife," Helms snapped. "In government, there are always discussions of everything under the sun."

"Of assassinations?" the reporter asked again.

"Of everything under the sun!" Helms repeated emphatically.

"You didn't answer my question," the reporter said.

"I'm not trying to answer your question," Helms replied.

Yesterday was Helms' third and longest appearance before the eight-member commission chaired by Vice President Rockefeller. He was also questioned in private for two days last week by the commission's investigative staff.

The interrogation, he said, covered a variety of subjects, including the allegations of illegal domestic spying by the CIA, which are the main focus of the commission's inquiry.

The current CIA director, William E. Colby, also testified yesterday for three hours following Helms, but declined to answer any questions from reporters. Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger, who oversees the CIA as the president's national security advisor, is scheduled to appear before the group before it completes its investigation and prepares a final report.

Helms' denial to reporters did not necessarily rule out the possibility that the CIA had actively considered launching assassination attempts or that the agency had launched an attempt which was not successful, such as the alleged attempts to kill Cuban Premier Fidel Castro.

When reporters pressed him further, Helms replied:

"I do not know of any foreign leader that was ever assassinated by the CIA. That's a very simple, direct statement. It's my honest belief and conviction."

Were there "discussions of assassination?"

"But this government discusses every conceivable matter over the years of every kind of context," Helms protested. "I can't for the life of me understand why it is a matter of great interest to the American public that two men may have sat in the State Department or the Defense Department or somewhere and discussed things that may be unacceptable to the American public."