

Helms spurned written orders

F Post 9-18-75

WASHINGTON (AP) — Former CIA Director Richard Helms testified Wednesday his employes were trained to accept oral commands as "orders written in blood" — and therefore he had spurned ink and paper when relaying a directive from the President of the United States.

Helms said the CIA's failure to destroy its cache of poisons in accordance with former President Richard M. Nixon's order was an "odd aberration" unlikely to recur.

He told the Senate Intelligence Committee that while he issued no written backup order he had assumed the shellfish toxin and other poisons had been destroyed.

Sen. Walter Mondale, D-Minn., told Helms and Thomas Karamessines, the CIA's former deputy director for plans, that their responses pinpoint the difficulty the committee has had in assessing

responsibility inside CIA for a wide variety of questionable actions, including the alleged assassination of foreign leaders.

"The situation always is something happened and nobody did it," Mondale said.

Shortly after Helms testified, it was announced that Sidney Gottlieb, a former CIA scientist whom Karamessines identified as the person to whom he relayed the order to destroy the toxins, has told the committee through his lawyer he will invoke the Fifth Amendment and refuse to answer questions.

The committee is seeking to question Gottlieb, former head of the agency's Technical Services Division, in connection with both the retention of the shellfish toxin and the destruction of records about the CIA's testing of LSD and other behavior-modifying drugs.

Frederick A. O. Schwarz Jr., the

committee's chief counsel, said the Justice Department has been told that if Gottlieb does invoke his constitutional right to avoid self-incrimination, the committee will seek to compel his testimony by granting him immunity for whatever he might say.

Both Helms, now U.S. ambassador to Iran, and Karamessines testified that Gottlieb appeared to agree fully with them that the order issued early in 1970 by former president Richard M. Nixon was valid, did apply to the CIA, and should be complied with.

The order renounced the use by the United States of chemical and biological weapons and directed that they be destroyed.

Dr. Nathan Gordon, the CIA scientist actually in charge of the agency's chemical weapons division — operation MK Naomi — testified Tuesday he and two associates decided on their own they need not comply with the order.

Gordon said he never received any orders on the subject from his CIA superiors but came to the conclusion he could ignore the Nixon order after analyzing news stories about the decision.

Gordon testified he concluded shellfish toxin was not intended to be included and that in any case the order applied only to the Defense Department, not the CIA.