

Nixon's Name Said Panel Ready to Used in Cover-Up; Approve Richardson



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Richard Helms: No recollection of Haldeman remark.

CIA Aide's Memo Disclosed on Hill

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The deputy director of the Central Intelligence Agency has made a written allegation that White House chief of staff H. R. (Bob) Haldeman told him "it is the President's wish" that the CIA seek to block an important phase of the Watergate investigation.

Gen. Vernon Walters made this assertion in a memorandum he wrote shortly after a White House meeting on June 23, 1972, between himself and Haldeman, presidential aide John D. Ehrlichman and CIA Director Richard M. Helms.

This disclosure was made yesterday by Sen. Stuart Symington (D-Mo.) in the course of a Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearing to question Helms on pressures by White House aides on the CIA to help cover up the Watergate trail.

It was the most direct allegation by a high-ranking

government official indicating presidential involvement in efforts to impede the Federal Bureau of Investigation's inquiry into the Watergate case.

Walters in previous statements and Helms yesterday provided details of the requests by Haldeman and other White House aides to have the CIA intercede with the FBI in calling off investigation of the "laundering" of Watergate funds through a Mexican bank account.

It has already been disclosed that some \$100,000 in Nixon re-election funds were passed through a Mexico City bank and ended up

in the safe of Maurice H. Stans to finance Watergate and other operations in the 1972 campaign.

Symington interrupted the questioning of Helms yesterday to drop his bombshell, which was based on one of 11 still-secret memos

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CIA, From A1

written by Walters in the course of the White House-CIA contacts.

In his memo on the June 23 meeting, Symington related, Walters reported that "Mr. Haldeman turned to General Walters and said, 'It is the President's wish that you go to see Mr. Gray.'"

Walters was to tell acting FBI Director L. Patrick Gray III that any investigation into the Watergate scandal's Mexican connection would jeopardize CIA operations. It was clear from the testimony that Helms' authority as CIA director was bypassed by the White House aides in their demand that Walters convey the proposal to Gray.

Within an hour after the June 23 meeting the deputy CIA director was given an appointment with Gray. Walters relayed to Gray the concern of "senior White House officials" that the Mexican investigation would jeopardize CIA activities, according to Walters' own testimony.

The source declined to identify the officials, but one of them was then White House counsel John W. Dean III, one federal investigator said. Dean told Kalmbach there was an "emergency" need for funds, the investigator said.

Newsweek, in the issue out yesterday, said the directive to Kalmbach was issued by Dean as well as by John D. Ehrlichman, then assistant to the President for domestic affairs, with the knowledge of former Attorney General John N. Mitchell and re-election campaign aide Frederick C. LaRue.

After consultation with Helms, however, the CIA took the position that the FBI inquiry would in no way jeopardize CIA activities in Mexico. The agency,

in effect, turned down the White House request.

Helms testified yesterday that he had no independent recollection of the Haldeman remark but he did not take issue with Walters' memorandum on the June 23 meeting, which was called by Haldeman six days after the Watergate break-in.

Helms did recall a Haldeman statement that "the opposition" was "capitalizing" on the Watergate episode. Haldeman, Helms recalled, "also made an incoherent statement about the Bay of Pigs investigation" at the time. The former CIA director said he told the White House aides he had no interest in the Bay of Pigs.

"I did not have any idea of what the Mexican investigation was about," Helms testified. He said he then took the position with Walters that there was no CIA involvement in the case.

Asked why neither he nor Walters went directly to the President about the incident, Helms said:

"My total preoccupation was in keeping the CIA uninvolved in the matter. I

was successful in doing that so far as I was concerned. . . I wanted to stay as the head of the agency to keep it out of it (the Watergate scandal). It is always a question of moral judgments and I was doing the best I could do."

Yesterday's hearing also raised publicly, for the first time, the question of whether Helms was replaced as CIA director in reprisal for his refusal to cooperate with the White House staff in the alleged cover-up effort.

Asked directly by Sen. Charles H. Percy (R-Ill.) whether there was any connection between his departure from the agency and his refusal to cooperate in the cover-up, Helms replied: "I don't know. I talked to the President and I think our conversation is privileged. At no time in that conversation was Watergate or anything else mentioned."

Helms was summoned to Camp David by the President several weeks after the 1972 election and informed he was being replaced as director. One close and long-standing associate of Helms in the agency and one senator close to the case claim that Helms was summarily fired without advance notice.

In only one remark yesterday did Helms reveal what colleagues describe as his personal bitterness over the sudden wrench in his lifelong CIA career.

"Giving assistance to the presidency," he said, "has not been a crime until relatively recently."

Yesterday's hearing at times took on the aspect of a rite of personal vindication for Helms, with half a dozen senators praising him for his refusal to give into the White House pressures.

"I think this country is in mortal danger when the Secret Service or the FBI are used for political purposes . . . or there is a prostituting of the professional services of the CIA," said Sen. Hubert H. Humphrey (D-

Minn.). "I appreciate your and General Walters' readiness to stand up to the pressures."

"I am convinced when the full story is known," Symington told Helms, "we will all agree that the career professionals of the two agencies — Helms of the CIA and Hoover of the FBI — did all they could to prevent efforts to subvert the things we all stand for. . . You stand high as public servants."

During the morning-long questioning Helms was asked about earlier White House efforts, during 1971, to get CIA assistance in the investigation of Pentagon Papers defendant Daniel Ellsberg as well as a series of news leaks on national security issues.

He testified that former National Security Council staff aide David Young told him that the requests to the CIA for internal security assistance were backed by national security adviser Henry A. Kissinger, as well as Ehrlichman, in 1971.

The CIA did provide—reluctantly, as Helms put it—the Ellsberg profile. It also made available disguise kits and other paraphernalia to Watergate conspirator E. Howard Hunt in July, 1971, without knowing the purpose of the equipment.

White House aide Ehrlichman requested that the CIA provide the assistance to Hunt for an undisclosed purpose. The mission turned out to be the burglary of the office of Ellsberg's psychiatrist, Dr. Lewis Fielding, of Beverly Hills, Calif., in September, 1971.

Helms said he ordered the help to Hunt terminated when he learned that the ex-CIA agent had requested the detailing of a CIA secretary from Paris to his own operations.

"I told Cushman it was going too far," Helms testified. "We were being used in this situation. I told him to call Ehrlichman and have it stopped." Gen. Robert E. Cushman at the time was deputy CIA director.