

CIA HEAD

Helms Cites

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Pressure

Grand Jury Told of Request

By BARRY KALB
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Former CIA director Richard M. Helms has reportedly told the Watergate grand jury that when H. R. Haldeman, John D. Ehrlichman and John W. Dean III tried to enlist CIA aid in the Watergate cover-up on June 23, Haldeman told Helms the request was coming from "higher up."

At that time, there was only one person at the White House higher than Haldeman, and that was President Nixon.

Helms, now ambassador to Iran, made the statement to the grand jury Friday, according to informal sources.

There was no indication that Haldeman, then White House chief

of staff, actually used Nixon's name in his unsuccessful effort to involve the CIA in the bugging and cover-up.

NOR COULD The Star-News' sources say that Helms had been able to ascertain that the requests for CIA help were in fact coming from the President.

But members of Congress who have been reporting on congressional testimony by Helms and Lt. Gen. Vernon A. Walters, CIA deputy director, have stressed that when requests were made by aides with the authority of Haldeman, the authority of the President himself was taken for granted.



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Sen. Stuart Symington, D-Mo., who as acting chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee has been questioning current and former CIA officials about CIA links with Watergate, announced yesterday that he had turned over to the grand jury and Senate Watergate Committee 11 in-house CIA memoranda. They deal with conversations between top CIA officials and the three White House aides — Haldeman, former domestic counsel head Ehrlichman and former White House counsel Dean — between June 23, 1972, and February of this year.

Without providing details, informed committee sources have told The Star-News they believe the memoranda contribute "added fact" to the suspicion that Nixon knew of the cover-up attempts.

SYMINGTON said on Thursday, after hearing closed-door testimony

from Helms, that "it is hard for me to visualize how Nixon could have been unaware of what was going on."

In a statement released Friday, in which he revealed the existence of the memoranda, Symington went even further:

"I believe these memoranda are highly significant, and my first impression of them is that they appear to verify one of my statements yesterday at a press conference, namely that it is very clear there was a high-level attempt by the White House to unload major responsibility for the Watergate bugging on the CIA.

"Also," Symington continued, "it is even more difficult for me to visualize that the President knew nothing about it."

One source close to the CIA-Watergate probe described the memos as presenting an important "added fact" about one of the conversations. This is believed to be the June 23 meeting—six days after the Watergate arrests—at which Walters was ordered by Haldeman, with Helms present, to interfere with the FBI's Watergate investigation.

Helms' grand jury testimony Friday, like that of convicted Watergate conspirator James W. McCord's before the Senate Watergate Committee,

was second-hand "hearsay" at best, and both bits of testimony fail to provide conclusive proof that the President knew of the cover-up.

McCord testified on Friday that in January John J. Caulfield, a former White House aide then working at the Treasury Department, had tried to buy McCord's silence at the Watergate trial and that Caulfield had said Nixon was aware of the attempt.

This prompted White House Press Secretary Ronald L. Ziegler to once again issue a statement denying that the President in any way knew about or condoned the cover-up.

While the grand jury continues to gather evidence against these three men and a number of others, a determined effort is being made by the prosecutors, the Senate committee and the press to determine whether there is any evidence to implicate Nixon.

According to Justice Department sources, the three prosecutors share the feeling that the President must have been aware of the cover-up. However, these sources say, the prosecutors so far have uncovered nothing more concrete than the type of testimony Helms gave.