

# Helms: CIA's Johnny.

By Lawrence Meyer  
Washington Post Staff Writer

By his own account, Richard M. Helms was present at the Central Intelligence Agency "from the day its doors opened in 1947."

By the account of the Rockefeller commission's inquiry into CIA domestic activities, Helms was also something of a Johnny-on-the-spot when the CIA was involving itself in a variety of activities that the commission describes as either improper or simply illegal.

Helms and CIA Director Allen W. Dulles on May 17, 1954, met with Postmaster General Arthur Summerfield to discuss continuation of a program under which the CIA was opening mail coming from and going to the Soviet Union.

"According to Helms' contemporaneous memorandum of the meeting," the Rockefeller commission report said, "Dulles described the importance of the mail program and asked that it be allowed to continue. No mention appears to have been made of covert mail opening."

Helms, then 41, was chief of operations in the Plans Directorate of CIA, moving up the bureaucratic ladder until he was appointed Director of Central Intelligence, a position he held from 1966 until 1973.

The commission report does not trace Helms' rise to the top. He simply appears periodically.

He is criticized by the commission at one point for "poor judgment" for destroying tapes and documents within days of receiving a request from Senate Majority Leader Mike Mansfield in January, 1973, not to destroy any material that might have some relevance to the Watergate investigation.

But Helms is not criticized often in the report, although it finds fault with a variety of CIA activities.

After describing how

Helms and then CIA Executive Director William E. Colby held up transmittal of evidence from the CIA to the Watergate prosecutors until January, 1973, the report asserts: "The agency is subject to serious criticism for this conduct."

Similarly, the commission asserts that the CIA's domestic mail-opening programs "were unlawful." That program continued through the Eisenhower administration after being instituted in 1952 and was not terminated until 1973.

In 1961, Dulles and Helms, then the deputy director for plans, met with the new Postmaster General, J. Edward Day, to inform him that mail was being opened.

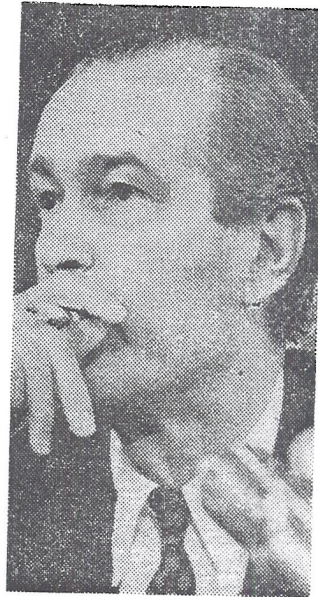
Years later, Helms, by then CIA Director, met separately with Postmaster General Winton M. Blount and Attorney General John N. Mitchell "to discuss the mail project," according to the report. Neither objected to it, the report said.

When the commission report turns to Operation Chaos—a special operations group established by the CIA to collect and evaluate information on foreign contacts with American dissidents—Helms' role is central.

Despite Helms' acknowledgment in a Sept. 6, 1969, memo of "statutory and de facto proscriptions on agency domestic involvements" in connection with the super secret Operation Chaos, Helms at other times indicated that he was aware the CIA had gone beyond the limit.

Helms sent a report prepared by the CIA, entitled "Restless Youth," to special presidential assistant for national security affairs Walt W. Rostow on Sept. 4, 1968, analyzing student revolutionary movements.

"You will," Helms wrote in a cover memo to Rostow, "of course, be aware of the peculiar sensitivity which attaches to the fact that the CIA has prepared a report



**RICHARD M. HELMS**  
... discussed mail opening

on student activities both here and abroad."

Five months later, Helms sent another copy of "Restless Youth" to Henry A. Kissinger, then President Nixon's assistant for national security affairs.

"This is an area not within the charter of this agency, so I need not emphasize how extremely sensitive this makes the paper," Helms wrote Kissinger. "Should anyone learn of its existence it would prove most embarrassing for all concerned."

The State Department said in a statement last night that the section of "Restless Youth" dealing with radical students in America is only 12 pages out of a total of 264 and that "there is no indication in this section that it is derived from surveillance or any sensitive sources or methods."

Kissinger has denied knowledge of domestic intelligence gathering activities by the CIA.

Helms' memo, the statement said, did not indicate that the information in the

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report resulted from "unusual or illegal investigative activities" and it was "assumed that Director Helms' cautionary note was directed at emphasizing that it was not within the Agency's charter to do analyses on American student activities, rather than any implication that the analysis itself was based on illegal or improper investigative activities."

Helms rejected one attempt by the CIA to use its agents to collect information on domestic dissidents, known as "Project One," according to the report. But a second program, called "project Two," involved "agents' observations of domestic activities," according to the report, and these observations were turned over to Chaos.

As a result, the report said, "a limited quantity of intelligence on domestic dissident activities" was collected and disseminated.

"Director Helms testified that he was not aware of this collection and dissemination," the report said.

Chaos used three agents to gather information on domestic radical activities during the period from 1969 through 1971, according to the report. "Helms testified that he was not aware of the domestic use of these agents," the report said.

Even within the CIA, however, Chaos was a controversial operation. In December, 1972, in response to internal criticism of the program, Helms stated in a memo, "Chaos is a legitimate counterintelligence function of the agency and cannot be stopped simply because some members of the organization do not like this activity."

In dealing with the Watergate affair, the commission report broadly summarized previously known information and concluded that it found no evidence that the

Cia either participated in or knew in advance of the Watergate break-in or the break-in at the offices of Daniel Ellsberg's psychiatrist.

"The commission considers the agency's delay of nearly a year in instituting such an investigation, (of a possible CIA tie to the Watergate break-in) the agency's failure promptly to disclose relevant information in its possession, and the agency's destruction of some materials which may have contained relevant information to reflect poor judgment and to be subject to criticism."

Although this criticism is directed at the CIA by the commission, the narrative of the report shows that all of the actions or failures criticized were in Helms' control.