

Helms Perjury Suggested By C.I.A. in '74 Report

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WASHINGTON, July 24—The Central Intelligence Agency informed the Justice Department last year that Richard Helms, the former Director of Central Intelligence,

might have committed perjury in testimony before a Senate committee, according to informed Government officials.

The officials said that William E. Colby, the present intelligence director, decided after reviewing the results of a three-month internal inquiry by the C.I.A. to inform the Justice Department voluntarily of the matter.

In the testimony at issue, Mr. Helms told the committee that the C.I.A. had played a limited role in undermining the government of Salvador Allende Gossens, Chile's late Marxist President.

According to the officials, the apparent discrepancies between the testimony of Mr. Helms and the facts of the C.I.A.'s effort to generate political opposition to Dr. Allende were made known by Mr. Colby to Laurence H. Silberman, then the Acting Attorney General, in a meeting at the Justice Department last Dec. 19.

The meeting took place some three months after the first published accounts of a covert, \$8-million campaign by the C.I.A. to bring about Dr. Allende's downfall. At the meeting, Mr. Colby initially called to Mr. Silberman's attention a purported 20-year-old agreement between the C.I.A. and Justice Department that he said permitted the agency to waive criminal prosecution of its employees in sensitive cases.

In recalling the meeting before a House subcommittee last

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month, Mr. Colby did not mention Mr. Helms but referred only to "a matter" that had come up "in which I had to make a decision as to whether [it] would be sent along to the Justice Department or not."

Yesterday, John S. Warner, the agency's general counsel, told the same subcommittee that the "matter" had stemmed from a three-month internal C.I.A. investigation and that it involved possible perjured testimony and "might" have touched on the agency's activities in Chile.

Representative Bella S. Abzug, the Manhattan Democrat who heads the subcommittee,

asked Mr. Warner yesterday whether the potentially perjurious testimony had been given by Mr. Helms, but he declined to answer.

Government officials familiar with the Colby-Silberman conversations confirmed later, however, that the incompleteness of Mr. Helms's sworn statements had been the subject of discussion.

In his testimony before the subcommittee headed by Mrs. Abzug last month, Mr. Colby said that while considering the Helms problem he had been advised for the first time of the agreement that the C.I.A. has said allowed it to retain discretion in reporting cases of criminal misconduct by its employees to the Justice Department. The C.I.A. says the agreement was reached in 1954 with William P. Rogers, then the Deputy Attorney General.

Justice Dept. Denials

Mr. Rogers has said that he cannot remember any such agreement, and Justice Department spokesmen have said that they can find no evidence that it was brought to the attention of anyone there before last December.

Mr. Colby testified in June that when he was first informed of the agreement late last year "it sounded a little wrong to me" and that he consulted Mr. Silberman about its legal validity during the meeting.

Mr. Silberman, Mr. Colby continued, told him it was not valid, "at which point I then went ahead with the information."

Another source familiar with the conversation, however, said that Mr. Colby had prefaced the discussion by asking, in a half-wistful, half-joking way, whether the agreement could be extended "just a bit longer." Told that it could not, he then began to relate the detail of the Helms case, the source said.

James Wilderotter, a former Justice official who, like Mr. Warner, attended the Dec. 19 meeting, said in an affidavit given to the Abzug subcommittee earlier this month that it had taken place a Mr. Colby's request.

Like Mr. Colby and Mr. Warner, Mr. Wilderotter did not mention Mr. Helms's name in connection with the discussion. But he did say that the meeting involved "a referral to us of a possible offense under the laws of the United States."

Mr. Silberman is now the

Ambassador to Yugoslavia, and an official of the American Embassy in Belgrade said yesterday that he was traveling outside the city.

Subject Under Inquiry

Justice Department officials declined today to confirm that Mr. Helms's Senate testimony was the subject of the Colby-Silberman discussion, but they said that whatever the subject was, it remained under investigation by the department.

The case against Mr. Helms, now the American Ambassador to Iran, stems from his sworn testimony of the C.I.A.'s involvement in internal Chilean affairs before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in 1974 during hearings on his confirmation as the Ambassador to Iran.

At one point, Mr. Helms was asked by Senator Stuart Symington, a Missouri Democrat, whether the C.I.A. had had "any money passed to the opponents of Allende?"

"No, Sir," Mr. Helms replied. He gave the same answer at another point to Mr. Symington's query about whether the C.I.A. had ever tried "to overthrow the Government of Chile" while it was headed by Dr. Allende.

The New York Times reported last September that the agency's effort to overthrow Dr. Allende's Government included providing millions of dollars to labor unions and trade groups that were opposed to Dr. Allende's socialistic policies.

Judging from Mr. Warner's comment of yesterday that the agency's internal investigation of the Helms's testimony lasted about three months, the inquiry apparently was begun shortly after the appearance in The Times of a series of articles on the Chilean affair.

Kidnapping Plan Cited

The Times reported today that the plot against Dr. Allende had been more extensive than the efforts to encourage internal opposition to his policies and had extended in 1970 to the C.I.A.'s involvement in planning two military coups d'état, one of which included a proposal to kidnap the chief of staff of the Chilean Army.

Dr. Allende was killed in a coup on Sept. 11, 1973.

It could not be learned today whether Mr. Colby made available to Mr. Silberman last December details of the agency's role in the planning for the two 1970 coups, which reportedly grew out of an authorization by former President Nixon of an all-out effort to keep Dr. Allende, the first freely elected Marxist leader in the Western Hemisphere, from coming to power.

Nor was it known whether the Justice Department's investigation of Mr. Helms's Senate testimony, which has previously been described as "exhaustive," has been expanded to take account of his denial before the Foreign Relations

Committee of any C.I.A. involvement in domestic intelligence-gathering operations aimed at the anti-Vietnam war movement in the United States.

A Presidential commission reported last month that in 1967, while Mr. Helms was serving as the Director of Central Intelligence, the C.I.A. initiated, at Mr. Helms's direction, a seven-year domestic intelligence effort, termed operation Chaos, that eventually compiled files on more than 7,000 American dissenters.