

WXPost DEC 25 1974

Domestic Spying Denied

Helms Disclaims Charges Made Against CIA

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Richard M. Helms "categorically denied" yesterday that the Central Intelligence Agency under his direction from 1966 to 1973 "conducted illegal domestic operations" against opponents of the war in Vietnam.

Helms, who has been U.S. ambassador to Iran since early 1973, also denied that "any unit" to conduct such activities was ever created while he was head of the CIA.

That sweeping disclaimer by Helms of published charges that the CIA illegally engaged in domestic spying on war critics during the Nixon administration was made public without amplification, and without definitions of Helms' terminology. The Helms statement was issued by the State Department in response to an inquiry to Helms from Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger. Helms was unavailable for any further explanation.

The Helms denial coincided with comments from the former head of CIA counterintelligence, James Angleton, who has suddenly resigned, that published reports of CIA domestic operations have been exaggerated, but there is "something to it."

Angleton, who said he resigned from the CIA because his usefulness has been destroyed by the controversy, was quoted by United Press International as also saying, "I think there should be a full investigation."

The State Department said Secretary Kissinger received the report yesterday from the present CIA director, William E. Colby, which President Ford ordered after the publication of accusations that the CIA breached its authority by conducting covert operations inside the United States. Kissinger met with Colby late yesterday afternoon at the State Department, and officials said Colby's report will go out "on the next courier plane" to Mr. Ford at his Vail, Colo., vacation headquarters.

Kissinger spoke to the President by telephone yesterday about the CIA controversy, a spokesman said.

No information was available on the contents of Colby's report, nor would officials say whether it concurred with Helms' published denial.

Despite Kissinger's dealings with Colby and Helms, State Department spokesman Robert Anderson said reports that Kissinger is conducting an inquiry into the CIA charges are the result of "a misunderstanding." Kissinger "has not been asked nor is he conducting an investigation of public allegations against the CIA," said Anderson.

Kissinger is only acting on the President's instructions "to transmit a report on these allegations prepared by Mr. Colby," said Anderson, in Kissinger's role in the ricocheting controversy, Anderson said Kissinger "earnestly hopes

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that judgments on these allegations will be suspended" until President Ford studies Colby's report and decides if "further steps may be needed."

State Department officials said they were not in a position to amplify Helms' denial which they made public yesterday, because, they said, it was the substance of what they received from him in the Iranian capital of Teheran.

Helms, they said, was responding to charges initially published by The New York Times on Sunday, which said that the CIA during the Nixon administration kept files on at least 10,000 Americans in a special unit and conducted surveillance of antiwar groups. The CIA, the account said, also engaged in domestic break-ins and wiretapping in the United States, although that also is legally beyond its jurisdiction. The latter charge has been aired before.

Spokesman Anderson at the State Department said, "Ambassador Helms has categorically denied that under his stewardship the CIA conducted illegal domestic operations against antiwar activists or dissidents or that any unit to do so was created under him as director."

Anderson said he was unable to explain further how Helms was defining "illegal" or "domestic" or "operations." CIA officials regularly maintain that none of their operations are ever carried out without prior official authority.

Helms left his Teheran post yesterday, Anderson said, under arrangements made "last October" for him to take leave at this time, and is scheduled to be in Washington about Jan. 2 or Jan. 3. That would be when Kissinger plans to return to Washington from a vacation in Puerto Rico, which is scheduled to begin on Thursday.

Anderson said Helms now is "spending the holiday with relatives" in Europe. At the American embassy in Teheran, a spokesman said yesterday that Helms was unavailable and his present whereabouts are "classified."

Sen. Edmund S. Muskie (D-Maine), chairman of a Senate Government Operations subcommittee that has been exploring more effective congressional review of the CIA and the FBI, said yesterday:

"Denials simply are not enough. We have to know the scope of their activities, so we can judge for ourselves whether they exceeded their mandate and authority under the law. The legislation denying them [the CIA] domestic jurisdiction is clear on its face."

Muskie said that the limited congressional review of the CIA's operations, and "the pressures generated within the last two days," require "vigorous" inquiry to produce "active congressional oversight" of CIA operations. Several other committees earlier announced plans to investigate the current charges.

Angleton, who was identified in The New York Times as the CIA official whose office was covertly in charge of domestic surveillance operations in the United States, answered some reporters' telephone calls yesterday morning at his suburban Virginia home, then stopped responding to press inquiries.

This exchange with Angleton was reported by UPI:

Asked to spell out the reasons for his resignation, which became known yesterday, Angleton said slowly:

"Police state . . . Soviet bloc . . . fragmentation . . . I had a son in the infantry in Vietnam. Went from private to corporal.

Was the son killed or wounded?

"No," Angleton said, "I think he's okay."

He said he thought The New York Times' Sunday disclosures were exaggerated but there was "something to it."

"I agree with some of it," he said.

Angleton also was quoted as saying: "I haven't slept in three days. I'm in my pajamas now and there's a TV crew outside waiting to see me and the telephone keeps ringing."

He said he was quitting the CIA at the age of 57 because "my usefulness has ended. I don't know what I will do."

Angleton denied that there was any friction between his department at the CIA and the FBI, which has official domestic security authority in the United States. "We have the best relations with the Federal Bureau of Investigation," he said.

Rep. Lucien N. Nedzi (D-Mich.), chairman of the House Armed Services subcommittee on investigations, said yesterday on the CBS Morning News TV show that his committee has discussed with CIA Director Colby the "overstepping of bounds" by the agency.

Information was conveyed to me," said Nedzi, "which suggested the overstepping of bounds, but it certainly wasn't of the dimension . . . of what has appeared in the newspapers . . ."

Nedzi said he thinks it "can be conceded — as in any large bureaucracy — there's been an overstepping of bounds, some improprieties, but I want to emphasize that . . . the information I have does not square, as I said, with the information that is being circulated at the present time."

Asked what he meant by "improprieties," Nedzi said, "you might call it illegalities in terms of — of exceeding their charter." Nedzi said the CIA "shouldn't be active in the United States, but the question of whether there is any grounds for criminal prosecution still remains. I'm not aware of anything in the . . . statutes" establishing the CIA "that provides for . . . criminal sanctions."

Nedzi said "it's my intent to hold a very thorough hearing, to make all of this information public so that the public can have an opportunity to judge what precisely took place."