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CIA and Written Word

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Former high-level members of the Central Intelligence Agency have said in interviews that, to their knowledge, the agency's subversive counterintelligence division never made written reports on its sensitive activities to Richard Helms or other top agency officials.

In a series of recent telephone interviews, the former CIA men, including some who had access to details of the agency's covert operations overseas, said that James Angleton and his key deputy in the CIA's counterintelligence unit, Richard Ober, were believed to have made only oral reports to Helms, who headed the CIA from 1966 to 1973

A former CIA undercover agent, who said that he participated in domestic break-ins and wiretaps while monitoring radicals in New York City in the late 1960s and early 1970s, said he never received a advance written approval nor did he ever file written reports on the sensitive missions.

These and the other former CIA men who were interviewed all questioned whether a CIA report on domestic spying made available last week was, in fact, an accurate accounting of what went on.

In his 45-page statement in a *de publico* Wednesday, CIA director William Colby acknowledged that the agency had initiated what he termed some "questionable" activities, such as the infiltration of undercover agents into radical groups and the

accumulation of counterintelligence files on 10,000 Americans.

But Colby, in summarizing other domestic CIA operations for the Senate appropriations intelligence subcommittee, cited only three break-ins in 1966, 1969 and 1971, all involving past and present employees of the agency, and a total of 21 telephone wiretaps, 19 of them similarly stemming from the activities of past and present operatives.

Well-placed sources have said, however, that there were a number of CIA-directed wiretaps and break-ins in the United States in the last ten years aimed at radicals and other dissident groups.

Some of these activities, they said, were conducted by outside "contract" operatives who were paid in cash and provided with no

records of papers to indicate that they were working on behalf of the CIA.

It was this kind of alleged activity that will not show up in any agency file anywhere, according to the former agency officials who were interviewed.

"When ever it's supersecret and ultrasensitive," said one former employee, "part of the tradecraft you're taught (in CIA training schools) is never to put things in writing — it's the ultimate security precaution."

This former official, who learned of the CIA's domestic activities well before they were publicly reported, suggested that Colby might have limited his report of the break-in activities to the Senators only to those operations undertaken by CIA men themselves — and not provided an accounting of

break-ins authorized by "contract" employees.

Another possibility, the former official said, was that Colby might have deliberately ignored those break-ins and wiretaps aimed at potential Soviet and other foreign espionage agents in the belief that such domestic activities against foreign nationals were not illegal.

Another former high-level official recalled that the agency's penchant for not putting things in writing "was always a sore point."

"There were constant battles between the guys in the field (overseas) and the guys in headquarters about writing reports and keeping such things as petty cash files," he added.

"The guys in the field would always win out because it was considered better to get the job done than to keep good records on it."