

WXPost

Helms Assures

JAN 23 1975

Panel on CIA

Spying in U.S.

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Former Central Intelligence Agency Director Richard M. Helms was quoted as telling the Senate Foreign Relations Committee yesterday that if there was CIA infiltration of American radical groups, it occurred without his knowledge.

Sen. Gale W. McGee (D-Wyo.), who gave that report, said the three-hour closed hearing was devoted almost entirely to questioning Helms about his previous congressional testimony.

It was unclear how Helms related his testimony that he was unaware of any CIA infiltration of radical groups with his public statement last week that acknowledged some CIA involvement in domestic spying.

After the low-key hearing yesterday, four committee members who commented publicly said they were satis-

fied with Helms' testimony on the CIA's controversial role in this country and Chile.

Sen. John J. Sparkman (D-Ala.), Foreign Relations Committee chairman, called Helms' answers "full and frank." "As far as I'm concerned, I'd be glad for this to end it," Sparkman said in regard to the committee's questioning of Helms.

Current CIA Director William E. Colby last week acknowledged that the super-secret intelligence agency had spied on American journalists and political dissenters, opened the mail of private citizens, planted informers inside domestic protest groups and assembled the agency's own secret files on more than 10,000 Americans.

Helms said that the CIA, which he headed from 1966 to 1973, had not been involved in any wrongdoing.

However, Helms told the Senate Armed Services Committee last Thursday that the CIA had some involvement in domestic intelligence operations because of "express concern of the President" about possible foreign links to the "upsurge of extreme radicalism in this country."

After testifying yesterday, Helms would only tell reporters, "I had a very fair and good hearing." Asked if he thought he might be asked to resign his present post of ambassador to Iran, Helms said, "I don't know why."

Sparkman said Helms had finished testifying before the Foreign Relations Committee, which has scheduled no other witnesses on CIA activities.

One committee member was quoted by an aide as describing yesterday's questioning of Helms as "soft." However, Sen. Hubert H. Humphrey (D-Minn.) said the questioning he heard, particularly that by Sen. Frank Church (D-Idaho) on the CIA's activities in Chile, was "very good."

Humphrey said the session helped clear up some "apparent conflicts" in Helms' previous testimony caused by confusion over what actually had been asked and answered.

Sen. Stuart Symington (D-Mo.) said after the hearing, Helms "explained his position satisfactorily to me." Symington added that Congress' look at CIA involves "only 15 cents of the intelligence tax dollar." Referring to the military intelligence agencies, Symington said, "It's about time we investigated all of it."