

Former CIA Chief Helms Won't Tell Why He Thinks  
Nixon Eased Him Out

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by James McCartney

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President Nixon has given no explanation for firing Helms ...

There has been speculation that Helms was removed because the White House was unhappy with his independence. Some believe the Nixon Administration wanted reports more in keeping - or supportive - of its policies.

No one on the Foreign Relations Committee asked Helms about his dismissal, but reporters questioned him later.

"That is cocktail party chatter," he replied. "The CIA has established a tradition of fair and honest reporting. Presidents know that and all Presidents appreciate the need for that."

Does he think that tradition is now threatened?

"I don't know. We'll have to wait and see."

Helms did say, in response to a question from committee chairman Sen. J. William Fulbright ... that the CIA had nothing to do with the Watergate affair.

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He seemed amused by questions concerning his new appointment. "Mr. Chairman," he said to Fulbright at one point, "you know as much about Iran as I do."

[End.]