

CIA Not Consulted On Son Tay Raid

Washington

President Nixon and Defense Secretary Melvin R. Laird gave the go-ahead order for the raid on the Son Tay POW camp in North Vietnam without consulting the Central Intelligence Agency, it was learned yesterday.

Key Senators who have been concerned about the possibility of an intelligence failure and who have been quietly probing into the background of the mission were incredulous when they learned that the CIA was not involved.

"It's absolutely incredi-

ble," said one influential Senator familiar with Defense and Intelligence matters and who has not been critical of the Administration's policy in Vietnam. "What the hell do we have a CIA and a director of Central Intelligence for?"

Senator sources indicated that CIA director Richard Helms may have been advised of the Son Tay operation in its early planning stage—perhaps in August or September—but that neither he nor the CIA was further consulted prior to the raid on November 20.

Times-Post Service

Paraphrase of statement by Melvin Laird at press conference 15 Dec 70 (this file 16 Dec, NYTimes):

The Pentagon consulted with the [CIA] on a continuing basis from last May on plans for the raid on the prisoner of war camp at Son Tay in North Vietnam and that agency did not suggest it had evidence there were no Americans at Son Tay.