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SF Examiner

CIA Chief

In Israel

To Confer

Examiner News Services

TEL AVIV — Israel announced today that the director of the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency is here for talks with Prime Minister Golda Meir and other top government officials.

The visit by Richard C. Helms came at a crucial juncture, with a relaxing of Israeli-Soviet relations possible, Israel upset over a "phantom" U.S. peace plan, and Jerusalem and Washington apparently at odds over the Soviet involvement in the Arab world.

Helms arrived unannounced about two days ago, but his presence was not known until yesterday. Israel's military press censorship barred disclosure of his visit until today.

Data

Helms' mission is believed to be related to the CIA's interest in gathering data from Israelis on current Soviet activities and ambitions in the eastern Mediterranean, the Red Sea, Persian Gulf and Indian Ocean.

In this connection Helms was expected to confer with his Israeli counterpart — a man whose identity is secret under Israeli laws. He will probably also meet Defense Minister Moshe Dayan.

The CIA's reputation has prompted speculation that some kind of ultra-sensitive operation may be in the works.

One source guessed that "the job may be so close to execution that the chief had to come over and make the final check."

The initial reports that Helms was here originated in London and indirectly in New York. His presence was admitted in a statement attributed to an Israeli Foreign

Ministry spokesman. Earlier, both the Foreign Ministry and the U.S. Embassy said they had "no knowledge" of Helms' arrival.

Gromyko

His visit came only two days after reports that a Soviet journalist had visited Israel, touching off speculation a breakthrough may be near for renewal of diplomatic relations between the Soviet Union and Israel.

In Moscow, however, Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko brushed off such reports. "They don't even deserve to be refuted," he said yesterday at the airport, where he had gone to meet Egyptian Foreign Minister Mahmoud Riad. Relations between Russia and Israel were broken following the 1967 Arab-Israeli war.

Riad is visiting Moscow to exchange documents of ratification on the new Soviet-Egyptian friendship treaty signed in May.