

Ford Tells CIA to Reply to Charges

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Concern Mounts in Congress

Washington.

President Ford yesterday ordered William Colby, director of the Central Intelligence Agency, to report "within a matter of days" on the published allegations of illegal CIA spying on American citizens.

Mr. Ford's call for an investigation, announced to newsmen by White House press secretary, Ron Nessen, at Vail, Colo., where the President is on vacation, came on a day of heightened congressional concern and protest over the spying, initially reported Sunday by the New York Times.

The chairmen of three major committees announced yesterday that they would begin extensive hearings into the CIA soon after the new Congress convenes next month.

Nessen told newsmen that the President has ordered Colby to submit his report through the National Security Council, headed by Secretary of State Henry Kissinger.

"The purpose is to find out exactly what did happen," the press aide said.

Asked about the future of Richard Helms, the former CIA director whose dismissal as ambassador to Iran has been urged by at least one senator, Nessen cautioned newsmen to "put in perspective what we have here."

"We have a newspaper account of past activities of the CIA," he said. "That's all we have. We need to avoid hardening these activities into fact. Pending this (Colby's) report, it seems that to make this kind of judgement is premature."

In its Sunday dispatch, the Times, quoting well-placed government sources, report-

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ed that the CIA had violated its charter by mounting a massive intelligence operation during the Nixon administration against members of the anti-war movement and other dissident groups in the United States. Intelligence files on at least 10,000 American citizens were compiled, the Times quoted its sources as saying.

Nessen, in response to a question, told reporters that Colby had informed the President last week of the New York Times's pending account of illegal domestic spying. Asked why Mr. Ford did not immediately demand a report from Colby upon learning of the allegations, he said he was unable to provide any further information.

Asked why the White House was asking the CIA, in effect, to investigate itself, Nessen did not respond directly, but only repeated that Mr. Ford had initiated the investigation.

Nessen's comments climaxed a confusing day for the dispersed Ford administration, which seemed to be unprepared for the intense reactions to the reports of illegal spying.

News agencies initially reported yesterday that the Justice Department had begun an inquiry into the CIA. Later accounts said Mr. Ford had told Kissinger to make the study.

The confusion was finally resolved by a high-level Kissinger aide, who told a newsmen that "what happened is that the President has asked Colby to give him a report and Henry asked Colby to submit it to the President through the NSC."

Earlier, the State Department announced that Kissinger had asked Helms, who served as director of the CIA from 1966 until 1973, for a separate report on the allegations.

Helms has made no public comment on the published reports, but Robert Anderson, the State Department's spokesman told newsmen that Helms would return to testify before any

congressional committee seeking his appearance. There were no immediate plans for Helm's return pending such a request, the spokesman added.

In response to questions, Anderson also said he could "confidently say" that Kissinger had no knowledge of any illegal domestic spying by the CIA. Asked further whether Kissinger should have known, as national security adviser, of such activities, Anderson said "I'd assume he'd see projects done by the CIA that concerned national security affairs."

The CIA officially remained silent again on the New York Times story. "We're not talking about that story," one agency officer told a caller.

The most pointed congressional reaction to the allegations of CIA spying came from Senator John Sparkman (Dem.-Ala), who will become chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee next month.

"I have been shocked by the revelations regarding CIA activities in the United States," Sparkman said in a statement "This is a domestic matter but there have been other operations of the CIA in foreign fields that have disturbed the members of the Foreign Relations Committee."

His hearings, the senator said, would concentrate on the CIA's foreign activities but, nonetheless, Helms would be summoned to testify "since many of the things being brought to light occurred while he was the head of the CIA."

Senator John Stennis, (Dem-Miss.), who is chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, said his committee also would conduct an in-depth investigation into the CIA.

In a statement Stennis said the inquiry would be "aimed at determining whether the agency is presently operating within the letter and spirit of the 1947 basic charter creating the organization." That charter bars any domestic CIA activity.

New York Times