

Inside Report on Helms, the CIA and the Shah

Washington

Ambassador Richard Helms told the CIA last summer he was "washing his hands" of a \$500 million surveillance system being built for Iran amid growing problems and charges of corruption, the Washington Post said yesterday.

The newspaper, citing unpublished documents, also reported both Helms and the shah of Iran have said they think the Soviet Union was behind the death of three Americans working on the surveillance system.

Last August 28, three Ameri-

cans working for Rockwell International Co. on the secret project called IBEX were shot to death in Tehran, the Iranian capital. Their killings remain unsolved.

The Post said it had obtained a series of documents that spell out in part the cloudy two-year history of IBEX and report on private conversations of the shah, his generals and Helms.

The newspaper quoted the shah as telling an unnamed American visitor three days after the killings, which had been attributed to Islamic Moslem terrorists: "The Russians were behind this incident

as well as (a) previous military one." It said Helms told the same person he agreed with the shah.

The shah asked the CIA in 1974 for aid in creating a system of electronic eyes and ears around his borders, according to the Post account. Rockwell obtained the \$31 million contract for the initial phase of the IBEX surveillance system in 1975, after apparently violating warnings against using "middlemen," the newspaper said.

It said Helms sent a handwritten note to CIA Director George Bush in July, 1976, requesting a CIA official visit Iran to hear allegations

about IBEX, including concerns that the system was a dud and would never work.

It quoted a memo of a conversation between Helms and an American visitor:

The "ambassador interrupted to say he had completely washed his hands of IBEX. He had called a very senior CIA man from Washington to come check on it. He had him sit down and take notes of all charges and allegations he had heard. He then told this man he was totally washing his hands of the responsibility. It would all rest on CIA — if it failed, it was going to

blow up on them. They could do what they wished."

In an interview on CBS-TV yesterday, Bush said he had never received a note from Helms saying the ambassador had washed his hands of the project. Bush refused to discuss the IBEX project further.

"I couldn't go into details of that, but I can say I feel what we are doing in any area has adequate (congressional) oversight," said Bush. "I know we are acting in the law, and I feel confident we're acting responsibly."

The Post said the shah, according to a memo of a September 1

conversation, charged the "chicanery of Pentagon officials and their military and civilian representatives here were intolerable. Patience was unavoidable until the election, but not necessarily longer than that."

It said the shah cut off meaningful relations with top Pentagon representatives in Iran months ago.

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