

Helms Informed That He Is Target Of Federal Jury Inquiry on Chile

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WASHINGTON, Jan. 14—The Justice Department has formally notified an attorney for Richard Helms that the former Director of Central Intelligence and Ambassador to Iran is a target of a Federal grand jury's investigation, Justice Department sources said today.

The grand jury, which is meeting here, is said to be hearing allegations that Mr. Helms and officials of the International Telephone and Telegraph Corporation were involved in a conspiracy to fabricate and coordinate the statements they made during a 1973 Senate investigation into activities of the corporation and the C.I.A. in Chile.

A Justice Department source familiar with the case said that Mr. Helms faced possible charges of perjury and obstruction of justice, both of which are felonies. He said that Edward Bennett Williams, the Washington lawyer who represents Mr. Helms, was notified in the last week that Mr. Helms was a target of the inquiry.

Mr. Williams did not return several calls to his office and Mr. Helms could not be reached for comment.

The formal notification followed a report in The New York Times on Dec. 23 that the grand jury was focusing on the activities of Mr. Helms and two I.T.T. officers, Harold S. Geneen, chairman of

the board and president, and John A. McCone, a member of the board of directors who served as C. I. A. chief from 1961 to 1965. The Times article quoted a high-level source as describing Mr. Helms as the primary target of the grand jury.

While a grand jury investigation is preliminary to an indictment and does not necessarily result in one, a number of criminal lawyers said that in inquiries as extensive as this one it would be unusual to notify someone that he was a target if serious thought had not been given to prosecution.

Two sources familiar with the case stressed that it was not likely that any indictment could be handed up before Jan. 20, so the investigation will continue into the next administration.

The issue of possible perjury and obstruction of justice centers on a hearings held in March and April 1973 by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee's Subcommittee on Multinational Corporations, which was headed by Frank Church, Democrat of Idaho. Officials from International Telephone and the C.I.A. testified repeatedly that there had been no exchanges of intelligence information or other covert contacts between them concerning Chile.

In 1975, however, the Senate Intelligence Committee, which was also headed by Mr. Church, obtained information that I.T.T., after getting advice from the C.I.A., provided \$350,000 in cash to a conservative opponent of Dr. Salvador Allende Gossens, the Marxist whose election to the presidency in 1970 was opposed by the United States Government and by American corporations with business interests in Chile.

The Senate Intelligence Committee investigation also disclosed that the C.I.A. had a major secret operation of its own that funneled more than \$8 million to help opponents of Dr. Allende, who died during a coup d'etat in September 1973. This disclosure appeared to contradict testimony that Mr. Helms, who has resigned his post in Iran, had given a another Senate hearing.