

CIA's Memo on Coverup --  
'President's Wish' Reported

## General Said He Was Pressured by Haldeman To Thwart the Probe

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Washington

The deputy director of the Central Intelligence Agency has made a written allegation that White House chief of staff H. R. Haldeman told him "it is the President's wish" that the CIA seek to block an important phase of the Watergate investigation.

Lieutenant General Vernon Walters made this assertion in a memorandum he wrote shortly after a White House meeting on June 23, 1972, of himself, Haldeman, presidential aide John D. Ehrlichman and CIA director Richard M. Helms.

This disclosure was made yesterday by Senator Stuart Symington (Dem.-Mo.) in the course of a Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearing to question Helms on pressures by White House aides on the CIA to help cover up the Watergate investigative trail.

It was the most direct allegation by a high-ranking government official indicating presidential involvement in efforts to impede the FBI's inquiry into the Watergate case.

### MEXICO

Walters in previous statements and Helms yesterday provided details of the requests by Haldeman and other White House aides to have the CIA intercede with the FBI in calling off investigation of the "laundering" of Watergate funds through a Mexican bank account.

It has already been disclosed that \$100,000 in Nixon re-election funds were passed through a Mexico City bank and ended up in the safe of Maurice H. Stans to finance Watergate and other operations in the 1972 campaign.

Symington interrupted the questioning of Helms to drop his bombshell, which was based on one of 11 still-secret memos written by

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days after the Watergate break-in.

Asked why neither he nor Walters went directly to the President about the incident, Helms said:

"My total preoccupation was in keeping the CIA uninvolved in the matter. I was successful in doing that so far as I was concerned. . . I wanted to stay as the head of the agency to keep it out of it (the Watergate scandal). It is always a question of moral judgments and I was doing the best I could do."

### TELEPHONE

Still another of Walters' "memorandums of correspondence" — written last year but disclosed yesterday by another congressional source — quotes Gray as saying that the President, during a telephone conversation, had inquired about "the case," an apparent reference to the Watergate inquiry.

According to excerpts obtained by the New York Times, this memorandum quotes Gray as telling the President that the Watergate case could not be covered up and that he felt Mr. Nixon should get rid of those involved.

This memorandum, prepared July 13, is said to be Walters' recollection of a conversation held just a day earlier with Gray.

The document quotes Gray as having said Mr. Nixon had called him a week earlier to congratulate him on FBI action frustrating an airplane hijacking in San Francisco.

### RECOMMEND

"Toward the end of the conversation," according to the Walters memorandum, "the President asked him (Gray) if he had talked to me (Walters) about the case. Gray replied that he had. The President then asked him what his recommendation was in this case."

The memorandum then continued:

"Gray had replied that the case could not be covered up and it would lead quite high and he felt that the President should get rid of the people that were involved. Any attempt to involve the FBI or the CIA in this case could only prove a mortal wound and would achieve

nothing.

"The President then said, 'Then I should get rid of whoever is involved, no matter how high up?' Gray replied that was his recommendation.

"The President then asked what I thought and Gray said my views were the same as his. The President took it well and thanked him."

### DEAN

The memorandum further states that Gray told Walters that he had subsequently telephoned Dean, then the President's White House counsel, to tell him of the conversation with Mr. Nixon and of his recommendation that all involved be discharged.

Walters aid, according to the memorandum, that Dean's response to that was, "OK."

### REPRISAL

Yesterday's hearing also raised publicly, for the first time, the question of whether Helms was replaced as CIA director in reprisal for his refusal to cooperate with the White House staff in the alleged coverup effort.

Asked directly by Senator Charles Percy (Rep.-Ill.) whether there was any connection between his departure from the agency and his refusal to cooperate in the coverup, Helms replied:

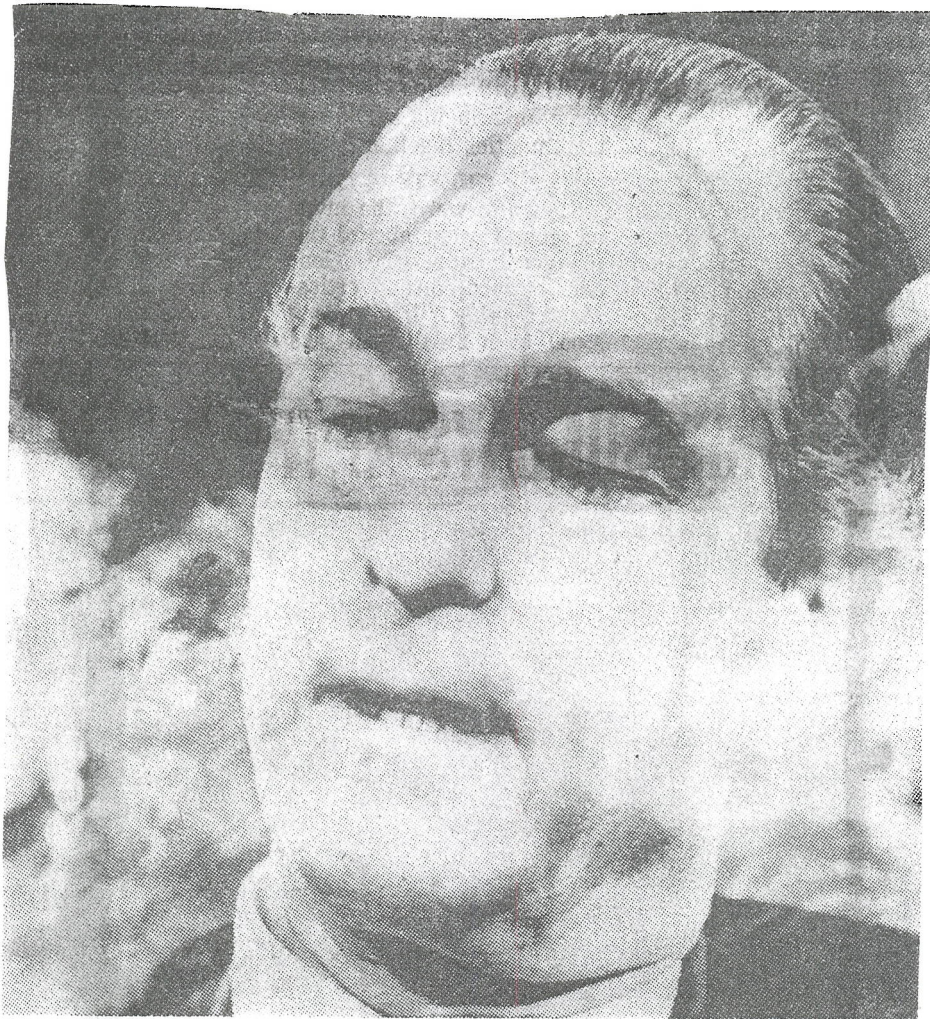
"I don't know. I talked to the President and I think our conversation is privileged. At no time in that conversation was Watergate or anything else mentioned."

Helms was summoned to Camp David by the President several weeks after the 1972 election and informed he was being replaced as director. One close and long-standing associate of Helms in the agency and one senator close to the case claim that Helms was summarily fired without advance notice.

Yesterday's hearing at times took on the aspect of a rite of personal vindication for Helms, with half a dozen senators praising him for his refusal to give in to the White House pressures.

"I think this country is in mortal danger when the Secret Service or the FBI are used for political purposes . . . or there is a prostituting of the professional services of the CIA," said Senator Hubert H. Humphrey (Dem.-Minn.) "I appreciate your and General Walters' readiness to stand up to the pressures."





*AP Wirephoto*

RICHARD HELMS TESTIFIED AS REPORT WAS REVEALED  
**Cigarette smoke** swirled around him at the Senate hearing