

Watergate and Security

CIA Didn't 'Advise' Nixon

Washington

Key officials of the Central Intelligence Agency say that President Nixon apparently made no effort to inquire directly whether the Watergate break-in involved covert CIA operations.

Lieutenant General Vernon A. Walters, deputy director of the agency at the time of the break-in last June 17, told a Senate subcommittee yesterday that the President did not ask him whether the agency was involved in the burglary attempt on the Democratic party's headquarters at the Watergate complex.

Richard Helms, director of the agency at the time of the break-in, also told a Senate committee earlier this week that he had no conversation with Mr. Nixon during that period.

STATEMENT

Mr. Nixon, in his statement issued yesterday, said that within a few days after the break-in, "I was advised that there was a possibility of CIA involvement in some way."

The President's statement continued:

"It did seem to me possible that, because of the involvement of former CIA personnel, and because of some of their apparent association, the investigation could lead to the uncovering of covert CIA operations totally unrelated to the Watergate break-in."

In his statement, the President did not say by whom he was "advised" of the possibility of CIA involvement.

QUESTION

Walters' comments on not having been asked by the President about CIA involvement came in answer to a question posed during his appearance before a Senate appropriations subcommittee headed by Senator John L. McClellan, (Dem-Ark.).

"The general told us that the President did not talk to him about possible CIA involvement," the Senator said later. "He did tell us, however, that the President had called him about another matter shortly after his return from Moscow, but it had nothing to do with Watergate."

Mr. Nixon visited Moscow in May of last year several

weeks before the Watergate break-in.

AIDES

Walters, in a number of other appearances before congressional committees in the last two weeks, detailed alleged efforts by three top White House aides — H. R. Haldeman, John D. Ehrlichman and John W. Dean III — to involve the CIA in covering up Watergate affair.

Both the general and Helms said that the White House overtures had been rejected.

Walters was named deputy CIA director by Mr. Nixon late last spring. He had served as official interpreter on foreign trips made by Mr. Nixon as vice president in the 1950s.

According to the general's earlier testimony, efforts of the three White House aides to involve the CIA in the Watergate coverup had centered on him, not on his superior Helms.

MEETING

He told of being called to the White House, along with Helms, six days after the Watergate break-in, and told

by Haldeman and Ehrlichman that the "Watergate incident was causing trouble and was being exploited by the opposition."

Walters testified that he had been told that "it had been decided at the White House" that he go to L. Patrick Gray, then acting director of the FBI, to try to persuade him to halt an FBI investigation of Nixon campaign funds "laundered" through a Mexico City bank.

A "memorandum of conversation" written by Walters following that meeting — and disclosed earlier this week by Senator Stuart Symington (Dem-Mo.) — states that at one point, Haldeman turned to the general and said, "It is the President's wish that you go to see Mr. Gray."

While not denying that he had written that memorandum shortly after that June 23 meeting, Walters has indicated in testimony to several congressional committees this week that now he is not sure Haldeman made any such statement invoking the President's name.

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