

Watergate Panel Hears Ex-CIA Chief

Former CIA Director Richard M. Helms testified in executive session yesterday before the Senate select Watergate committee for about six hours.

Helms, now U.S. ambassador to Iran, was called back from Teheran at the request of Sen. Howard H. Baker (R-Tenn.), vice chairman of the committee to answer questions concerning activities of the CIA and the Watergate scandals.

Although neither Baker nor Helms would discuss what was said during the closed session, Baker told reporters after hearing three hours of testimony that Helms had been "very forthcoming" as a witness. Baker said that he was recommending that Helms' testimony and other documents held by the committee that are classified be made public.

"I think that now we've reached the stage where rumor is possibly more destructive than fact," Baker said. "Everybody's best interests would be served by an early and complete disclosure" of the information, he said.

Sen. Sam J. Ervin Jr. (D-N.C.), chairman of the committee, told reporters that he had no reason to suspect Helms was in any way involved in the Watergate affair. "I think Mr. Helms is a public servant above reproach," Ervin said. "I don't think Mr. Helms has ever done anything wrong in connection with the whole affair."