

NEW JOB CONSIDERED

CIA Chief Helms To Leave Post

CPYRGHT

AEC Boss Eyed As Successor

By OSWALD JOHNSTON
Star-News Staff Writer

Richard M. Helms will step down as director of the Central Intelligence Agency, high administration officials said yesterday.

This disclosure came amid indications that Helms, 59, has been offered another major assignment in the second Nixon administration and is still considering it.

Helms could not be reached for comment and high-ranking CIA officials who were reached late yesterday said they had no information about Helms' plans to step down or a possible replacement.

Official announcement of Helms' departure is being delayed while he considers an opportunity offered him by President Nixon to assume another high-level position, it is understood.

The exact nature of the new assignment possibility could not be ascertained. It was assumed it would involve the foreign policy field, in view of Helms' background.

Rumors that Helms would be stepping down have been prevalent for several weeks.

Helms was named director of the CIA in 1966 by President Lyndon Johnson. He had been a top figure in the agency under Allen Dulles and John A. McCone.

He was a newspaperman in Europe before World War II, and worked for the Office of

Strategic Services during and after the war. He joined the CIA at its inception in 1947.

He has been thought of as well regarded by Nixon as the nation's most experienced intelligence officer. Slightly more than a year ago his office was widely expanded in responsibility in a sweeping reorganization of the U.S. intelligence community.

The leading candidate under consideration to succeed Helms, authoritative sources indicate, is James R. Schlesinger, chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission and one of the chief architects of the intelligence reorganization.

The reorganization mandate made public by the White House in November 1971 gave Helms new authority to oversee the consolidated budget of the American foreign intelligence effort — variously estimated at \$5 billion to \$6 billion a year.

Schlesinger was assistant director of the Office of Management and Budget when plans to reorganize the intelligence establishment were first devised, and much of the planning was worked out by the OMB early in 1971.

The plan's main thrust was to coordinate the complicated and at times self-contradictory U.S. intelligence effort and place the separate establishments at the CIA, in the Defense Department, in the sepa-

rate uniformed services and in the State Department under one head.

When Helms was designated to fill this position it was widely supposed that the budgetary authority the new plan gave him would empower him not only to bring the rival intelligence establishments under control, but also to cut the aggregate cost of their operations by \$1 billion.

The extent to which this reorganization has succeeded during the year since it was announced is unclear.

The cost of intelligence gathering is still largely secret and the results of Nixon's move for economy in this field are not clearly known.

There has been little outward organizational change in the intelligence community. There have been many indications, however, that the sharp and bitter rivalry among the separate branches has been sharpened since Helms stepped into his enhanced leadership role.

To insiders, the latent rivalry between the CIA and the Pentagon's Defense Intelligence Agency has never been more bitter than during the past year. Helms has been a particular target of Pentagon intelligence experts ever since he contradicted their view that the Soviet Union was deploying a massive new missile sys-

tem designed for a nuclear first strike.

Well-informed sources in the defense and intelligence establishments have been looking to Schlesinger as a possible successor to Helms for a variety of reasons.

His close association with the reorganization is, probably, paramount. But there is also the factor that Schlesinger was a colleague of Andrew M. Marshall during his stint at the Rand Corporation. Marshall, as a result of the reorganization has become the ranking intelligence watchdog on the White House staff.

Schlesinger had been named for a promotion in the Nixon administration in March 1971 when his work on the reorganization plan was still in progress. At that time he had been picked for a ranking position in the Department of Interior, but the appointment was blocked by the opposition of Western senators who wanted a more obedient regional representative.

In July 1971 Schlesinger was picked for the top job at AEC.

Schlesinger was with one of the first groups of administration officials to call on Nixon at Camp David during his second-term reorganization deliberations. Schlesinger went there Nov. 21 — by coincidence, perhaps, just a day after Helms' own visit to the presidential retreat.