

Halperin Hits U.S. Secrecy

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Backing his claim with newly released documents, Morton H. Halperin today said the government has guarded the charters of its intelligence agencies only to prevent public debate and congressional oversight, not to protect legitimate secrets.

Halperin is a former Pentagon official and one-time aide to Henry Kissinger who is suing his former employers over a wiretap placed on his home telephone in an attempt by the Nixon administration to find news leakers.

He released documents secured through requests and legal actions filed under the Freedom of Information Act. They spell out much but not all of the hitherto secret charters of intelligence operations dating back to the infancy of the CIA in 1948.

THE DOCUMENTS say little that could not be anticipated by foreign intelligence operations or by anyone familiar with disclosures of the Senate Intelligence Committee. Halperin told a news conference that the import of the documents lies in the very fact that they contain no startling information.

The government had maintained prior to release that not even one sentence could be made public for fear that it would harm national security, he said.

The documents were kept secret, Halperin said, "to prevent public debate and congressional involvement . . . not because there's any information of value to adversaries of the United States."

Asked whether he thought government secrecy claims were therefore fraudulent, Halperin replied, "At best, they've been deceptive."

HALPERIN IS currently director of the Project on National Security and Civil Liberties which is jointly sponsored by the American Civil Liberties Union and the Center for National Security Studies.

He said one interesting document that turned up was one dating from 1970 which detailed the famous 40 Committee that governed covert operations which was signed by President Richard M. Nixon — a direct presidential link to such operations.

"By covert operations I mean those activities which, although designed to further official U.S. programs and policies abroad, are so planned and executed that the hand of the U.S. government is not apparent to unauthorized persons," read Nixon's national security memorandum.