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# Congress to probe FBI files

WASHINGTON (AP) — Congress is sending its own investigators into the FBI's secret files for the first time in history to appraise the effectiveness and legality of FBI operations.

FBI Director Clarence M. Kelley has agreed to the probe by the General Accounting Office, officials of both agencies said Thursday.

The audit was requested by the House Judiciary Committee and will focus first on the most controversial of all FBI activities, domestic spying.

The investigation will begin after the GAO concludes negotiations over the ground rules with the FBI, according to Richard Fogel, the GAO audit manager for the probe.

"Things are progressing satisfactorily" and those ground rules should be settled early next week, Fogel said in an interview. Late 1975 is the target for delivering the final report to Congress.

Fogel and FBI spokesman George Quinn said the negotiations primarily concern the procedure for allowing GAO auditors access to confidential information in domestic intelligence files.

The FBI already has agreed to make the information available in some manner designed to insure confidentiality, Quinn and Fogel said.

That step is a remarkable departure from the FBI's traditional insistence on secrecy, particularly during the 48 years it was ruled by the late J. Edgar Hoover.

"It is a change. One obvious reason is because Mr. Hoover is not there," Fogel said.

"We realize this is a very sensitive area," he continued. "We don't in any way want to inhibit the effectiveness of the bureau as an investigative agency."

Although the GAO routinely audits the practices of most other executive agencies, it hesitated to tackle the FBI until a congressional committee specifically requested it. None had until the House Judiciary Committee did last June.

"This is the first time we've really been involved with a substantive program over there," Fogel said. About seven years ago, he added, GAO auditors took their only other look at the FBI files, reviewing some internal management practices in the FBI as part of an overall audit of the Justice Department.

But the GAO has never assessed the FBI'S major functions with information gleaned from the agency's own files.

Now, he added, "we expect to be in the bureau on a continuing basis. Eventually, we plan to review all of the operations of the bureau as we do other agencies."