

Spies build \$310 million headquarters

WASHINGTON (AP) — The top-secret agency that manages the nation's spy satellites has nearly completed building a new \$310 million headquarters, unknown to its congressional overseers.

The existence of the four-tower, million-square-foot National Reconnaissance Office complex in the Virginia suburbs of Washington was disclosed Monday after President Clinton declassified the project.

"This is an unprecedented disclosure," said Sen. Robert Kerrey, D-Neb., a member of the Senate

Intelligence Committee. "The administration is saying mistakes were made."

Central Intelligence Director James Woolsey and Deputy Secretary of Defense John Deutch said in a joint statement they will form a team to review the project and its cost effectiveness, and find out why its existence wasn't disclosed to Congress.

They are to be among witnesses at a closed-door hearing of the Senate Intelligence panel Wednesday.

The structure, five miles south of

Million-square-foot building south of Dulles airport almost completed

Dulles International Airport, has been under construction for nearly four years under the guise of a new office building for defense contractor Rockwell International.

Sen. Dennis DeConcini, D-Ariz., who chairs the Senate committee, said the National Reconnaissance Office took great pride in finding a way to "hide an elephant on a foot-

ball field."

Congressional officials in charge of monitoring the Central Intelligence Agency and its projects knew a building was being constructed to consolidate offices of the reconnaissance agency, but were blind to its location, size and cost, Mr. DeConcini said.

The structure — roughly the size

2 Sections Press Run Today Post 31,950 News 14,850 Total 46,800

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...without telling Congress

of the CIA's headquarters complex in Langley, Va. — appears far too large for the number of people who work at the reconnaissance agency, committee aides said.

Plans call for some 1,900 employees and 1,000 outside contractors who work for the agency to be housed there, but the building is designed for 3,500 people.

The project was uncovered by a committee audit, and Mr. DeConcini told Mr. Clinton about it last week during a meeting on health care, he said. The president apparently had been unaware of

the project, he said.

Mr. DeConcini said there apparently was "an effort not to disclose the cost and even the location ... based on a culture and philosophy in much of the intelligence community that we don't have to account" for activities like other government agencies.

Sen. Howard Metzenbaum, D-Ohio, said the disclosure was "a good example of what happens when the government does business in the dark ... 68 acres, a million square feet, and nobody knows about it."