

Spy Unit's Spending Stuns Hill

\$310 Million Facility Secretly Sprouts Up Near Dulles Airport

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By Pierre Thomas
Washington Post Staff Writer

The Senate Select Committee on Intelligence yesterday charged that the clandestine agency that manages the nation's spy satellites has concealed from Congress the mushrooming cost of a \$310 million compound it has been secretly building near Dulles International Airport.

President Clinton declassified the existence of the proposed office complex for the National Reconnaissance Office (NRO) yesterday after several senators protested to him privately that they had been kept in the dark about the cost and scope of the project. At 1 million square feet, it is nearly one-fifth the size of the Pentagon.

The NRO, whose very existence was until two years ago an officially classified secret, is jointly overseen by the CIA and the Department of Defense. Until yesterday, the headquarters project had been publicly described as an office complex for Rockwell International, the Los Angeles-based defense contractor.

"In our preliminary judgment, we do not feel we were properly notified," committee Chairman Dennis DeConcini (D-Ariz.) told a news conference. "How could between \$200 million and \$300 million be authorized without providing a clear accounting?"

"There is an old saying that you've got to see it to believe it," said Sen. John W. Warner (Va.), the committee's senior Republican. "I was astonished by its magnitude. . . . Somehow this project slipped up the middle."

In a statement last night, CIA di-

rector R. James Woolsey and Deputy Secretary of Defense John M. Deutch acknowledged the existence of the project and announced they were forming a joint team to review it. The statement said the review

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team would address the questions raised by the Senate committee as well as "assure that the intelligence community will be in a position to plan and execute needed projects in a timely way in the future at least cost to the taxpayer."

DeConcini criticized the Pentagon and the CIA for not providing Congress adequate information. The intelligence community is a culture that "believes we don't have to account like everybody else in government," he said.

The senators said that they were told NRO was building a secret headquarters on a 68-acre tract of land in Chantilly about 30 miles from Washington in Fairfax County, but little else. They said they were not provided details of its scope and size, nor were they given adequate information on its costs.

Dissatisfied with the answers that they were getting, committee members asked their internal audit team to probe the construction project, which is part of the Westfields business park.

The audit was followed by a series of secret letters from the select committee, in which Warner and DeConcini demanded answers from Woolsey and Defense Secretary William J. Perry.

"We are shocked and dismayed to learn that the facility cost for the new NRO headquarters at Westfields may reach \$350 million by completion, nearly double the amount most recently briefed to the committee," said the letter, declassified yesterday. "In fact, the total anticipated cost was never effectively disclosed to our committee, either in the annual budget submissions or in related briefings."

In the letter, the senators requested a review that would answer a number of questions including:

- Why the NRO included the project in its basic intelligence budget, rather than presenting it as a new initiative, as the CIA did for its new headquarters at Langley.
- Why the NRO failed to use either

the General Services Administration or the Pentagon's military construction agency as support for the project.

The committee has scheduled a closed hearing Wednesday to review the matter with Woolsey, defense and NRO officials. Spokesmen for the agencies could not be reached for further comment last night. A Rockwell spokesman declined comment on the project saying "details are classified."

A Pentagon official said the National Reconnaissance Office is in charge of maintaining intelligence satellites for both the Pentagon and CIA. By law, the official said, the director of the agency is the assistant secretary of the Air Force for space. By coincidence, the official said, the person now in that job, Jeff Harris, is a CIA veteran. The joint statement said the project's primary contractor was Collins International Service Corp., a Rockwell subsidiary with experience in building high-security facilities.

"This is an unprecedented disclosure," said Sen. Bob Kerrey (D-Neb.). "The administration is saying mistakes were made."

The NRO's offices have been scattered throughout the United States, industry sources said, including at an air force base in Los Angeles, Fort Belvoir, Va., and the Pentagon.

The complex is off of Route 28 south of Willard Road in an area of the county that has several large industrial parks. It sits between Brookfield Corporate Center and Westfields International Center. There is a blue sign at the main en-

trance to the complex with the word "Rockwell" on it. Senators disclosed yesterday that the project calls for four mid-rise office towers and two large parking garages.

The project was billed in 1990 as major office complex for Rockwell and press accounts described Rockwell—not the federal government—as the site's purchaser.

J. Hamilton Lambert, former Fairfax County Chief Executive, said Rockwell came to the local board of supervisors in the fall of 1990 seeking expedited regulatory approval for the project. In particular, he recalled last night, Rockwell wanted waivers for elaborate security fences to surround the Westfields facility.

Lambert said the expedited treatment was granted Rockwell, whose arrival at Westfields was warmly welcomed as a boon to economic development. He recalled no speculation at the time among Fairfax lawmakers that the facility would be used for CIA operations.

A person familiar with the Northern Virginia development industry said the Senate's \$310 million estimate would be about twice the normal price for a one million square foot office building. But the cost of a building with sophisticated computer equipment can rise quickly, the person said, because of the cost of cooling equipment and special electrical connections required by large computers.

Staff writers Peter Baker, Stephen Barr, John Harris, Kent Jenkins Jr., John Mintz and Peter Pae contributed to this report.