

U.S. SPY SPENDING IS STILL UNKNOWN

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G.A.O. Unable to Audit C.I.A.,
House Inquiry Is Told

By JOHN M. CREWDSON

WASHINGTON, July 31—Elmer B. Staats, the Controller General, told a House committee today that the General Accounting Office had no idea how much money was spent each year by the dozen or so agencies that make up the Federal intelligence community.

In an appearance before the House Select Committee on Intelligence as that panel began its first round of open hearings, Mr. Staats referred to estimates of a \$6-billion annual budget for the Federal intelligence agencies as only a "guess."

He said that, with the exception of a few specific requests from Congress for information about the Central Intelligence Agency, the G.A.O., which he heads, gave up trying to audit the C.I.A. about 15 years ago because of difficulty in obtaining access to classified information.

Representative Otis G. Pike, the Suffolk Democrat who took over as head of the House select committee after it was reorganized earlier this month, said in an opening statement that the committee's mandate was to "investigate the intelligence-gathering activities of the United States Government."

"It is a huge order," Mr. Pike conceded, "and the only way we can get there is by starting. We start by looking at the cost."

The chairman also expressed hope that the committee's investigation, which he said "could not have taken place in most nations of this globe," would be undertaken for that reason in a spirit of "pride and not embarrassment."

Mr. Pike previously announced his intention to concentrate the investigation at first on attempting to learn more about the ways in which Federal funds were appropriated to the C.I.A., the National Security Agency and the Defense Intelligence Agency, and how they were in turn expended.

In an interview yesterday, he said that, by the end of next week, he hoped to know "the total amount we spend for foreign intelligence-gathering."

"I would like to know the total amount we spend for domestic intelligence-gathering, how high up you have to go to spend a million dollars, and what oversight is performed by either the G.A.O. or the Bureau of Budget on the expenditure of these funds," he added.

Today, however, Mr. Staats was unable to shed much light on the questions that Mr. Pike posed, although he did say that the G.A.O., which is the investigative arm of Congress, was eager and able to perform useful oversight of the intelligence agencies if the necessary cooperation was secured.

As an example of the stumbling blocks he said his agency had encountered, Mr. Staats noted that the heads of most of the intelligence agencies had the authority to spend unvouchered funds "on certificate" at their own discretion and without a subsequent accounting outside their agency.