

Rocky's Fears on NSA Hearings

Washington

Vice President Nelson Rockefeller said yesterday that public Senate hearings into the supersecret National Security Agency could jeopardize the lives of U.S. agents abroad.

He called the NSA "the most important agency this country has in terms of protecting our interests."

Rockefeller defended the agency's overseas electronic surveillance methods as being within the law and said he believes the Soviet Union has listened in on phone calls of U.S. congressmen and other Americans.

Rockefeller's remarks, during an interview with Los Angeles Times reporters, were the administration's first public argument for abandonment of hearings on the agency.

Members of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence Activities voted to postpone their hearings last week after a phone call from President Ford and a closed-door appeal from Attorney General Edward Levi.

"We don't want to give away information which could result in agents being killed or losing sources of intelligence," Rockefeller said.

He refused to discuss the role or number of NSA agents abroad.

The vice president said current investigations of the intelligence community had already given hostile nations more information than they deserved. He criticized congressional committees as being unclear in their goals.

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