

Lawyers investigate surveillance program

by UPI

WASHINGTON -- Lawyers in Washington have received the necessary security clearance to proceed with an investigation of a Bush administration warrantless surveillance program. In 2001, U.S. President George Bush authorized the National Security Agency to conduct warrantless surveillance on communications from the United States to overseas contacts believed to be affiliated with al-Qaida. A New York Times report uncovering the program sparking widespread allegations of abuse of presidential power. The U.S. Justice Department said it has reopened its internal investigation into the administration's warrantless surveillance program when its lawyers received security clearances to examine secret documents, The Washington Post reported Wednesday. Office of Professional Responsibility Chief counsel, H. Marshall Jarrett, said lawyers in his office "recently received the necessary security clearances and are now able to proceed with our investigation." He said the investigation focuses on "the role of Department of Justice attorneys in the authorization and oversight of warrantless electronic surveillance ... and in complying with the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act." The initial investigation closed in July 2006 because the Bush administration refused security clearances to lawyers with the OPR conducting the examination, the Post said.

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