

WASH STAR 3MAY53

Security Agency At Ft. Meade to Cost \$30 Million

Construction to Start On Secret Center for Radio Monitoring

Plans to build a \$30 million installation at Fort Meade, Md. for the super-secret National Security Agency came to light yesterday with announcement of bids on the first \$3 million worth of construction.

Bids will be opened this week on the initial work at Fort Meade. At one time it was announced that the agency was to be moved to Fort Knox, Ky., but that move was cancelled.

The agency, the most silent of the intelligence services, monitors millions of words sent in code or clear by friend and foe around the world each year. It now is scattered around the District area. Important supporting facilities are in nearby Maryland and Virginia.

The Corps of Engineers will open bids this week on an estimated \$3 million worth of "barracks type" construction at Fort Meade.

But the designs for the major construction work are not expected to be approved before the end of the year. A panel of expert engineers and architects has been called in to go over them.

Appropriated 2 Years Ago.

If all the \$30 million, appropriated two years ago, went into buildings alone, the new National Security Agency quarters would be one of the most expensive in this section. The new General Accounting Office building cost in the neighborhood of \$25 million and is the largest and most expensive in the District. The Pentagon, with roadways, parking lots, etc., cost around \$80 million. It has more office space than any other building in the world.

However, it is believed that much of the \$30 million allocated for the National Security Agency will be required for expensive equipment and moving some of the existing monitoring facilities to Fort Meade.

Little more than the name of the organization is mentioned officially. The Defense Department answers no questions about it beyond saying it is a "facility concerned with specialized research and training activities."

Many Employed Overseas.

The 1,100-page Federal budget, the Federal section of the Washington telephone directory and the Pentagon's own directory contain no mention of the agency. Separate Army and Navy agencies are listed in the phone books, however.

Unconfirmed reports have placed the number of agency employees at from 3,000 to 7,000 in the United States. Many others are working in overseas monitoring stations.