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Fort Meade's Big New Hush-Hush Building Nearing Completion

The hush-hush National Security Agency's new $35,000,000 home at Fort George G. Meade—97 per cent completed—will present the last word in structural and mechanical efficiency, as well as secretiveness, when it opens next fall.

The slumbering giant of a building, soon to be awakened by more than 12,000 employés of the nation's top intelligence agency, received a limited "public" inspection yesterday.

Occupancy is expected to begin in November when personnel starts the move from NSA's Arlington Hall headquarters in Virginia.

Yesterday's tour was staged by the Baltimore Post, Society of American Military Engineers, and was conducted by the Baltimore District, U.S. Corps of Army Engineers, which supervised construction of the building.

About 150 Make Tour

About 150 persons, including members of the society, contractors, a handful of reporters and other guests made the tour.

So secret is the NSA, that its name wasn't even mentioned by the guides or in pretour statistical information put out by the corps of engineers, which refers to the structure only as the "Department of Defense building at Fort Meade."

However, it is no secret that the building is for the NSA. Letters 2 feet tall about the main entrance label it the "National Security Agency."

With 1,400,000 square feet of floor space, the three-story steel, concrete and glass building is only a fourth the size of the Pentagon, but it is described as the largest building of its kind in the country.

Longest Corridor In U.S.

Shaped like a large square U with two interior light courts, the building is 980 feet long and 560 feet wide and houses the longest straight corridor in the country. It runs the entire 980-foot length of the building. The United States Capitol in Washington previously claimed this honor, but its central corridor is only 750 feet long.

A double fence with four guarded gatehouses, surrounds the new building.

Among the mechanical devices designed to keep the NSA's secrets secret is a system of "security conveyor belts" which run at 100 feet a minute through the basement. They will carry trays of documents and papers to eight substations in the structure.

Dialing Directs Tubes

A German-made pneumatic-tube system can carry papers at 25 feet a second and can handle up to 800 tubes an hour. Each tube has its own autopilot. You dial its destination and the tube goes to the proper station.

The outside walls are made of precast concrete panels and sealed windows. The building is completely air conditioned by four units, each of which turns out 1,100 tons of refrigerated air.

A cafeteria seats 1,400 and the auditorium will hold 500.

In addition, the building has eight snack bars, a post exchange, a complete hospital with X-ray, operating rooms and dental chairs, a shoe shop, barber shop and bank.

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