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Report urges security crackdown to curb spying at U.S. installations

By Aaron Epstein
Inquirer Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON — A high-level Pentagon commission, seeking to plug leaks in the government's security system, has recommended rewards for informants who report spies and an expanded use of lie-detector examinations, briefcase searches and background investigations at both military and civilian defense installations.

Defense Secretary Caspar W. Weinberger, saying he was "quite pleased" by the commission's report, which was released yesterday, promptly ordered military chiefs to carry out one of its 62 suggestions: a "top-to-bottom" inspection to pinpoint security lapses under current policies.

"While no system of security can provide foolproof protection against espionage, it can make espionage more difficult to undertake and more difficult to accomplish without detection," the report said, adding that the Defense Department's security program "falls short of providing as much assurance as it might that the nation's defense secrets are protected."

The commission, set up by Weinberger in June after the Walker family spy ring was discovered, said that "some commanders and supervisors show a clear disdain for security, leaving compliance to clerks and secretaries" while security officers are "buried" deep in their organizations.

The report called for travel restrictions on U.N. personnel from Soviet bloc nations, more severe penalties for security breaches by civilian workers and military contractors, fewer security clearances and intensified rechecking of individuals cleared for particularly sensitive jobs. A total of 3.8 million people currently hold security clearances of some sort.

Retired Army Gen. Richard G. Stilwell, the commission chairman, said that the government's security system was "in reasonably good shape"

but that it contained serious flaws that had led to "very, very damaging" losses of U.S. military secrets.

A key recommendation, he said, was to improve methods for investigating people seeking security clearances and detecting potential security risks, including research into ways of determining an individual's motivations and vulnerabilities to alcohol and sex.

The commission's four-month study, titled "Keeping the Nation's Secrets," was the result of the Pentagon's embarrassment over the Walker spy ring, which went undetected for 17 years.

John A. Walker Jr., a former Navy chief warrant officer who headed the espionage operation, pleaded guilty last month to turning over Navy codes and other secrets to the Soviet Union. His son, Michael, also admitted his guilt, and his brother, Arthur J. Walker, was convicted of espionage in August.

Arthur Walker has been sentenced to life in prison. Under a plea-bargain agreement, John Walker also is to get a life sentence and a 25-year term is expected for Michael.

Had the commission's recommendations been in effect years ago, John Walker probably would have

been caught sooner, Stilwell said, though he acknowledged that past recommendations to improve security had been ignored. But because of the Walker case, the recommendations of his commission stand a better chance of being carried out, Stilwell said.

He said that the commission included top-level officers and officials with security responsibilities and that their views were unanimous.

To overcome the reluctance of Defense Department and defense-industry employees to "inform" on fellow workers, the commission suggested that Congress be asked to start a program to reward those whose information led to the arrest of spies. Such information could be reported by way of "drop boxes, postcards or designated telephones," the commission said.

Stilwell said that the benefits would be worth the risk of getting false and damaging reports about

employees from "nuts" and "people with an ax to grind."

The recommendation for an expanded program of lie-detector testing is certain to be controversial in Congress, where members have objected that the tests are inaccurate and intrusive.

But Congress has authorized the Pentagon to give 3,500 polygraph tests this year for counterintelligence purposes, and 7,000 next year. The commission wants to enlarge the

program and make it permanent, arguing that the polygraph is "the primary technique currently available ... which offers any realistic promise of detecting penetrations of ... classified programs by hostile intelligence services."

The security report also called for more frequent searches at military facilities, where classified information often is taken home and "files bulge with unauthorized and often needless copies."