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CIA kept spy secrets breaches from

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WASHINGTON — The CIA hid from the White House and Congress the fact that Soviet agents had obtained copies of secret CIA plans for two of America's most sophisticated spy satellite systems.

The CIA was afraid knowledge of the losses would jeopardize Senate approval of the SALT II agreement, since the U.S.' ability to monitor Soviet arms buildups had been compromised.

The CIA, already bruised by charges of incompetence, also feared further incurring the wrath of President Carter, who supports the SALT concept, and who had sharply criticized the CIA for earlier security leaks.

Through a series of interviews with intelligence, military and congressional sources, few of whom wanted to be identified, the Sunday News Journal also found that the CIA:

- Withheld vital evidence for 18 months in two federal espionage cases because the information would have shown that the CIA had lost the Keyhole and Rhyolite spy satellite systems to the Soviet Union.

- Tried in 1978 to pin the security breach of the Keyhole — or KH-11 system — on a low-level employee, when the CIA knew the system's specifications had been sold to the Russians by someone else a year earlier.

- Caused an uproar in the Australian government when secret CIA payments were revealed at a trial of the man who sold satellite secrets to the Russians.

- Tried to hide from sister intelligence agencies at the De-

fense Department and the National Security Agency that the CIA was responsible for the loss of the satellites.

CIA spokesman Dale Peterson refused to comment on the cover-up, the loss of the satellite program or the Australian situation. "We are not prepared to say anything on this," he said.

The two satellite systems are highly sophisticated surveillance devices through which President Carter said the United States can make sure the Soviets are complying with the strategic arms limitations agreements now under negotiation.

Satellite verification is considered an absolute necessity because of the Soviet Union's constant refusal to allow on-site inspections of its bases.

However, the loss of the secret plans has given the Soviet Union vital technical information with which to limit the satellites' ability to monitor an arms build-up.

The KH-11 Keyhole system is a sophisticated photographic system. From its perch in orbit, the satellite can videotape objects as small as a golf ball on the ground and later transmit the pictures back to the U.S. intelligence.

It can also take photographs which can be recovered by the Air Force.

The Rhyolite system is essentially an eavesdropping device. It intercepts microwave transmissions of telephone calls, radio traffic, rocket telemetry and other messages. For example it can pick up phone conversations from the Kremlin and relay them back to U.S. intelligence agencies.

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getting the SALT II agreement ratified by the U.S. Senate. Verification safeguards for SALT have been in question since Carter visited CIA headquarters last August and criticized top agency officials for the security breach that led to espionage charges against William P. Kampiles, a CIA watch officer.

On Oct. 1, 1978, Carter revealed that the United States would rely heavily on spy satellites to verify SALT II. That same day, a body identified as former CIA official John A. Paisley was found floating in Chesapeake Bay.

The CIA claimed Paisley was a retired low-level analyst who had access to few U.S. secrets. When the News-Journal papers revealed he was a senior official in the spy satellite program, the U.S. Senate launched an investigation into the case.

The Senate probe centered on whether Paisley's death could be related to his knowledge of the satellite systems, and, what possible bearing it would have on the U.S. verification capabilities.

Victor Marchetti, a former senior CIA official, and others knowledgeable of the U.S. spy satellite program said Paisley could order "requirements" for both KH-11 and Rhyolite. "Requirements," Marchetti explained, is a CIA term for detailing where the satel-

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