



What workers have finally completed -- or perhaps not; few really know, and none would say -- is the nation's most secure courtroom for its most secretive court. In coming days, the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court will move from its current base at the Justice Department and settle into a new \$2 million home just off a public hallway in the District's federal courthouse.

The relocation is a rare public action by a mysterious Washington institution that is judged by its ability to keep secrets while overseeing the government's efforts to gather them. Its role, generally, is to determine whether the federal government can spy on U.S. citizens or foreigners in the United States in terrorism or espionage investigations.

Created in 1978 to curtail abusive government spying, the court enjoyed a rather obscure existence until the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, when authorities began to frantically intensify their spying efforts.

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