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# LegalTimes

Legal Times (Online)

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**HEADLINE:** Secret Sanctum;  
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**BYLINE:** Joe Palazzolo, Special to the legal times

**BODY:**

The nation's spy court has begun operations in a new, secure space on the third floor of the E. Barrett Prettyman Courthouse in downtown Washington, ending its 30-year run of issuing secret warrants from within the Justice Department, according to three sources connected to the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court who spoke on the condition of anonymity, citing the strict secrecy surrounding it. The court reviews government applications to conduct electronic surveillance and physical searches in terrorism and espionage investigations. It's unclear when the court first convened in its new home, but anyone walking down the hallway in the past few weeks could have guessed the \$2 million courtroom was primed for business. "Restricted Access" signs and biometric hand scanners guard the super-sensitive proceedings. Justice Department spokesman Dean Boyd declined to discuss the move, as did court officials. Chief Judge Royce Lamberth of the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia, who served on the FISA court from 1995 through 2002, and Colleen Kollar-Kotelly, the current chief FISA judge, were the driving forces behind the move. Lamberth says uprooting the court from the Justice Department symbolizes its independence, though critics say the move will have little impact on the judges' deference to the government. Justice Department reports show the court signs off on the vast majority of applications.

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