Panel to Study Military Eavesdropping

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WASHINGTON — The chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee, Senator John D. Rockefeller IV, said Thursday that the committee would investigate claims by two military eavesdroppers that they routinely listened in on private calls home from American military officers, aid workers and journalists stationed in Iraq.

Mr. Rockefeller, Democrat of West Virginia, called the accusations “extremely disturbing.”

“Any time there is an allegation regarding abuse of the privacy and civil liberties of Americans it is a very serious matter,” he said.

The two former intelligence officers, Adrienne Kinne, an Army reservist, and David Murfee Faulk, a Navy linguist, spoke Thursday to ABC News. They also were interviewed for a book on the National Security Agency by James Bamford, a former ABC producer and author of two earlier books on the agency, that is scheduled for publication next week.

Ms. Kinne and Mr. Faulk, both Arabic linguists, were based at Fort Gordon, Ga., where the N.S.A. has a large listening post focused on the Middle East. Ms. Kinne was there from 2001 to 2003 and Mr. Faulk was there from 2003 to 2007, Mr. Bamford said.

Ms. Kinne, who became an anti-Iraq-war activist, has spoken about her experiences as an eavesdropper to several Web publications since last year, but her accusations have not drawn broad attention. Mr. Faulk does not appear to have spoken out before.

Mr. Faulk told ABC that he and his colleagues listened to “personal phone calls of American officers, mostly in the Green Zone, calling home to the United States, talking to their spouses, sometimes their girlfriends.”

He said the eavesdroppers would swap recordings of intimate calls for entertainment.
“At times I was told: ‘Hey, check this out. There’s some good phone sex,’ ” he said.

Mr. Faulk said that when another eavesdropper protested that they were personal calls and should not be transcribed, a supervisor replied, “My orders were to transcribe everything.”

Under so-called minimization rules, an eavesdropper who inadvertently picks up an American’s private call is required to cut off the monitoring immediately and not to transcribe or keep a recording of the call.

Ms. Kinne spoke of listening to aid workers and journalists. She said the calls had often involved “personal, private things with Americans who are not in any way, shape or form associated with anything to do with terrorism.”

It was unclear whether the intercepts the two former intelligence officers described were part of the program of surveillance without warrants that President Bush approved shortly after the 2001 terrorist attacks. He and other officials said that program intercepted only calls of people believed to be linked to Al Qaeda.

A statement issued by the N.S.A. on Thursday night said, “Some of these allegations have been investigated and found to be unsubstantiated; others are in the investigation process.”

The statement said the agency operated within the law and took accusations of wrongdoing seriously. “When we find misconduct, we take swift and certain remedial action,” the statement said.

Mark Mansfield, a spokesman for Gen. Michael V. Hayden, who was director of the N.S.A. from 1999 to 2005 and is now director of the Central Intelligence Agency, said he had never approved illegal eavesdropping. “The notion that General Hayden sanctioned or tolerated illegalities of any sort is ridiculous on its face,” Mr. Mansfield said.