Houston Wiretap Data Set

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The chief of security for Southwestern Bell Telephone Co. in Houston has admitted he was aware of illegal police wiretapping but deliberately did nothing about it, Houston's police chief is expected to tell a congressional hearing today.

In a draft of his statement before the House Judiciary Committee's administration of justice subcommittee, Chief Carroll M. Lynn said he obtained the admission from the security chief, Jerry L. Slaughter, in a conversation the police chief secretly tape-recorded.

"Although he (Slaughter) personally denied giving illegal wiretap information to law enforcement officers, he admitted to me that he was aware that it was being done and that it was his policy to look the other way," Lynn's statement says.

Responding to a request for comment, a spokesman for Southwestern Bell, a subsidiary of American Telephone & Telegraph Co., quoted Slaughter as saying yesterday, "That's not true. It's a lie. I never told Chief Lynn that I knew of any illegal wiretaps."

Today's hearing of the subcommittee, headed by Rep. Robert W. Kastenmeier (D-Wis.), is also expected to hear testimony from Anthony J. P. Farris, former U.S. attorney in Houston.

Farris is expected to describe difficultures he has said he experienced when asking the FBI to investigate allegations that FBI and Drug Enforcement Administration agents participated with telephone company officials in the illegal police wiretapping

Although police in most states can wiretap lawfully with a court order, any form of wiretapping is illegal in Texas because the state has no state enabling legislation.

A federal grand jury in Houston is investigating the illegal police activities and possible complicity by the telephone company and federal agents.

Over the years, AT&T has consistently denied that it aids or engages in any form of illegal wiretapping. If an illegal wiretap is discovered by company employees, the giant utility has said, it is reported to the FBI.

According to a House judiciary subcommittee staff summary of an interview with Chief Lynn last month, Lynn said that Slaughter, a former FBI agent, said he had been told by Houston police that telephone company employees provided the department with wiretap assistance.