

U.S. Is Testing System to Use All Radio, TV

By Stephen Green
Washington Post Staff Writer

The Defense Department has started testing a special communications system that would have the ability to turn on automatically every radio and television set in the country to receive messages from the government.

However, current Nixon administration policy will not permit the system to be used for that purpose, according to a spokesman for the Pentagon's Defense and Civil Preparedness Office, which is testing it.

Called the Decision Information Distribution System, it would be used initially to turn on radio sets in police and fire stations in "strategic locations" in emergencies, according to the spokesman.

Information about the system surfaced yesterday after Rep. William S. Moorhead (D-Pa.) charged that "plans to permit government access to private homes via electronic devices have already been tested."

Earlier this week Moorhead

revealed that a government study group appointed by the White House science office proposed to put special FM radio receivers in every home to permit the government to communicate directly with citizens 24 hours a day.

That was one of many proposals in a 300-page document called "Communications for Social Needs" but was rejected, according to Dr. Edward E. David Jr., director of the White House Office of Science and Technology.

Moorhead said that the fact that the government has been testing a system that would give it access to private homes "raises serious questions about the truthfulness of Dr. David's statement." Moorhead added that he feared the possibility of "Big Brother" government.

Kenneth Miller, head of the Federal Communications Commission Emergency Communications Office, told The Washington Post that the Defense Department system would operate on long wave frequencies below the standard AM radio band. "It could turn on radios and television sets automatically and already has been tested," he said.

The Defense Department plan, according to Miller, calls ultimately for construction of 10 systems around the county to send messages on the system.

A testing station now is being built in Edgewood, Md., said the Defense and Civil Preparedness spokesman.

"There is no secret about this," added the spokesman. He explained that the White House Office of Telecommuni-

cations has decided that the system would not be used to turn on radios and televisions in private homes.

Citizens, he said, might have the option of acquiring special receivers that could be activated by the system.

Plans for the system, he acknowledged, call for it to have the capability to automatically turn on radio and television sets in private homes.

Moorhead said he interpreted Dr. David's statement earlier this week to mean that the White House science office has rejected only the FM radio portion of the "Social Needs" plan.

However, John Lannan, public affairs director for the White House science office, said the entire plan had been rejected. Lannan said he was unaware of the Defense Department system.

Despite the rejection of the "Social Needs" plan, "it exists and can be used," said Moorhead, chairman of the House Government Information Subcommittee.

He said the Subcommittee will hold hearings in January "so that the American people may know the full details about this and other Big Brother plans that the Nixon administration may be hiding from the Congress and the public."

Moorhead also said he has written to David, inviting him to testify at the hearings. Lannan said the letter has not been received at the White House.