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U.S. Told to Pay \$3,000 in CIA Mail-Opening Suit

NEW YORK, Aug. 17 (AP) — The federal government was ordered to pay \$1,000 today in an invasion-of-privacy suit to each of three U.S. citizens whose mail was opened as part of a Central Intelligence Agency domestic spying program.

U.S. District Court Judge Jack B. Weinstein also ordered the government to write letters of apology to the plaintiffs.

The government said it would decide whether to appeal the decision, in which the judge noted that more than 215,000 pieces of mail were opened between 1953 and 1973, including letters to the late author John Steinbeck and Sen. Frank Church (D-Idaho).

The case, the first arising from CIA mail surveillance, involved Norman Birnbaum, a sociology professor at Amherst College; Mary R. Macmillen, placement coordinator at Northeastern University in Boston, and Leonard Avery, a Minneapolis advertising executive.

Birnbaum, whose letter to a Soviet professor was opened, sued for \$50,000 in damages. Avery, whose letter from a son studying in Moscow was opened, sought \$20,000.