

# **U.S. Cables Monitored, House Told**

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By George Lardner Jr.

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Government agents have secretly been monitoring and photographing private international cables to and from Washington for years, House investigators have found.

Agents of either the FBI or the National Security Agency, it is understood, visited the offices of RCA Global Communications Inc. here at 3 a.m. each day to read all the international cables and photograph ones that interested them. The practice reportedly continued until May of 1975.

Similarly, the investigation found, FBI agents visited the Washington offices of ITT World Communications each day and collected copies of all cable traffic to and from a selected list of countries.

The daily collection of ITT cables, investigators were told, would be picked up around 11 a.m. and returned in mid-afternoon.

The findings became known in the wake of a tumultuous hearing before a House Government Operations subcommittee headed by Rep. Bella S. Abzug (D-N.Y.).

Attorney General Edward H. Levi made a last-minute

See CABLES, A3, Col.3

# Cables Monitored Secretly by U.S.

CABLES, From Al attempt to head off the hearing. Abzug said he invoked fears for the national security and protested that the testimony might taint the possibility of criminal prosecutions.

Dismissing Levi's complaints as groundless generalizations, Abzug said she had no intention of compromising national security. She said an investigation by the subcommittee staff had still turned up plenty of legitimate grist for public hearings, such as "violations of individual rights, the Constitution, the Fourth Amendment and the Federal Communications Act."

The star witness at the hearing was expected to be Joe R. Craig, the FBI's liaison man with telegraph company offices in the Washington area for about a decade before his retirement last year.

Craig, however, was ordered not to testify by FBI Director Clarence M. Kelly, apparently on the strength of a secrecy agreement required of all FBI agents.

Witnesses from RCA Global Communications and ITT World Communications had also been scheduled to appear, but Abzug said she was notified "only a day or so ago" that they would not appear unless subpoenaed.

After long and loud wrangling between Chairman Abzug and Rep. Sam Steiger (R-Ariz.), the subcommittee voted 5 to 3 to go ahead with the hearing.

Steiger maintained, incorrectly, that the Senate intelligence committee headed by Frank Church (D-Idaho) had agreed to conduct its investigation of the same issue in closed session.

Abzug said the Church committee had yet to make up its mind and predicted that it

would approve public hearings in a hurry as a result of the competition from her subcommittee.

Only two witnesses were heard—William Caming, chief spokesman for the American Telephone & Telegraph Co. on wiretapping and electronic surveillance, and Earl Comnor, security supervisor for the Chesapeake & Potomac Telephone Co. Officials of Western Union and Western Union International were standing by but were not called.

Making public only a brief summary of the subcommittee staff findings, Abzug said they would indicate that both "the FBI and NSA have apparently engaged in illegal and unconstitutional interception and copying of private communications sent by private individuals."

Commercial cable traffic to and from the United States, including messages between embassies here and their governments around the world, have been routinely monitored at least since World War II, she said. The practices, Abzug added, included:

— "The physical examination of ALL cables in the Washington office of RCA Global Communications Inc.

— "The physical examination of ALL cables to and from selected countries in the Washington office of ITT World Communications (a subsidiary of ITT).

— "The securing from cable companies of Telex 'line channel' numbers which, with telephone company cooperation, permit interception of all Telex traffic on those lines." (Telex messages are transmitted by Teletype using telephone lines.)

Telex is widely used by private business in communicating among a network of offices, such as a newspaper and its bureaus.