

# Senate panel reveals secret info

WASHINGTON (AP) — Ignoring Ford administration protests, the Senate Intelligence Committee disclosed Thursday a highly secret arrangement by which U.S. spies, for 30 years, read up to 1.8 million international telegrams a year.

The release of information on the National Security Agency's "Project Shamrock" was the first time a Senate committee has acted on its own to disclose classified information that the executive branch wanted to keep secret, committee staff members said.

The decision was attacked by Sens. John Tower, R-Tex., and Barry Goldwater, R-Ariz., as completely unjustified and dangerous to national security.

White House officials have objected to release of the report but had no immediate comment Wednesday.

The disclosure was made and defended by Sen. Frank Church, D-Idaho. He said the information demonstrates that Congress needs to write a basic law governing NSA operations that would be similar to the legal charter which is intended to govern the Central Intelligence Agency.

Project Shamrock began in 1947 with the approval of President Harry S. Truman and his top military and legal advisers, Church said, and involved the cooperation of three giant international telegraph companies — RCA Global, ITT World Communications and Western Union International.

Reading from a statement authorized by the committee in a 7-3 vote, Church said the agency has "selected about 150,000 messages a month for NSA analysts to review" from all of those available to it.

"Thousands of those messages in one form or another were distributed to other agencies in response to 'foreign intelligence requirements,'" Church said.

At the beginning of the operation, he

said, the companies were told that agents would read only those telegrams related to foreign intelligence targets. But he said that when it ended, the NSA was reading the telegrams of many Americans as well.

According to the Church statement, this is how the operation worked: "RCA Global and ITT World Communications provided NSA with the great bulk of their international message traffic, which NSA then selected for traffic of foreign intelligence targets.

"Western Union International sorted the traffic itself and provided NSA only with copies of the traffic of certain foreign targets and all the traffic to one country."

Church said that during a 1947 meeting with Secretary of Defense James Forrestal, company representatives were promised that if they cooperated "they would suffer no criminal liability and no public exposure, at least as long as the current administration was in office."

Forrestal told the firms the arrangements had the approval of President Truman and Atty. Gen. Tom C. Clark, Church said.

Project Shamrock was stopped suddenly last May, just when the

committee began asking questions about it, Church said.

Since 1949 there is no evidence that any of the companies involved ever asked assurances that what they were doing was proper or had top-level government approval, Church said.

Church said he was authorized to make the information public after seeking a ruling from the Senate parliamentarian that disclosure did not violate Senate rules.

## National scene

In making that finding, the parliamentarian said Project Shamrock apparently violated the 1934 Communications Act and the Fourth Amendment to the Constitution which forbids unreasonable searches and seizures.

Church said that because Project Shamrock involved a "simple transfer of the telegraph traffic to the government" disclosure would not compromise any of NSA's secret communications

technology.

Meanwhile, Atty. Gen. Edward H. Levi told the committee that the NSA's ability to eavesdrop on overseas telephone calls might be subject to the Fourth Amendment ban on unreasonable searches of American citizens.

He avoided a direct statement on the legality of the NSA's sophisticated surveillance techniques, saying only that these present somewhat different legal questions from those posed by domestic bugging and wiretapping.

At present, Levi said, "there is no warrantless electronic surveillance directed against any American citizen."

He said he will not authorize any such surveillance in the future "unless it is clear that the American citizen is an active, conscious agent or collaborator of a foreign power."

"Surveillance without a warrant will not be conducted for purposes of security against domestic or internal threats," Levi said.

In another development, the House intelligence committee voted 7-2 to subpoena U.S. intelligence reports to determine whether estimates of Soviet strength and weapons are being distorted.