

Big Suit Filed Over Cable Interceptions

The American Civil Liberties Union filed a multi-million-dollar damage suit yesterday over domestic cable interceptions by U.S. spy agencies, charging that such interceptions violate the Constitution.

The suit, filed in U.S. District Court on behalf of several anti-Vietnam war groups and their members, named as defendants officials of the Central Intelligence Agency and the super-secret National Security Agency as well as four major U.S. telegraph companies.

ACLU lawyer John Shattuck said at a press conference that one aim of the action is to obtain damages for those whose rights had been violated by the cable interceptions and a court injunction to prevent it from happening in the future.

"Another (aim) is to challenge for the first time an arrogant assumption by the intelligence community that technology has somehow outstripped the American Constitution," he said.

Among officials named in the suit are CIA Director William Colby and his immediate predecessors, Defense Secretary James Schlesinger and Richard Helms—now U.S. ambassador to Iran—and Admiral Noel Gayler, commander of U.S. naval forces in the Pacific.

The four telegraph companies are Western Union, RCA Global Communications, ITT World Communications and American Cable and Radio Corp.

Reuters