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Wire Cable Spys

Washington

Top officials of two international communications companies acknowledged yesterday that their firms cooperated with the National Security Agency's interception of foreign government messages.

One of the firms, Western Union International, turned over to a House subcommittee two documents that Chairman Bella S. Abzug (Dem-N.Y.) indicated listed countries whose cables were intercepted and copied for the security agency. It said the intercept program ended in 1965.

The chairman of RCA Global Communications Inc. said his company was involved in the plan from 1947 to 1975, but disassociated itself from it after he learned about it.

The two companies decided not to comply with a request by Attorney General Edward Levi, acting for President Ford, that they refuse to testify before the House Government Operations subcommittee on government information and individual rights. They had been given subpoenas to appear.

Five present and former FBI and National Security Agency employees who refused one week ago to testify face contempt of Congress citations.

Thomas S. Greenish, executive vice president of Western Union International, told the subcommittee that although his company stopped copying international cables for the National Security Agency in 1965 the messages it transmitted and received still could be subject to interception.

"There is no step we can take" to assure the privacy of the communications, he said. "Someone can listen in on satellites."

He also said that although the company uses wire cables in message transmissions, it does not control them and that they are conceivably open to taps.

Associated Press