

NEW U.S. CHECK ON MAIL FROM OVERSEAS

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WASHINGTON — (AP) — The government has issued new regulations authorizing the opening of mail from overseas without the recipient's permission, but a department spokesman said "it's not intended to be used on personal mail."

Marquis Childs, contributing editor of the St. Louis Post-Dispatch, disclosed the new regulation in a Sunday story.

Martin Wolf, a Post Office Department spokesman, confirmed the regulations cover all incoming mail referred to as Universal Postal Union mail, which would include sealed mail. Overseas mail does not carry first-class markings.

"However, it's not intended to be used on personal mail," Wolf said.

Clerk's Choice

Under the regulations, any postal clerk can refer any piece of overseas mail to the Customs Bureau of the Treasury Department.

Childs wrote the new regulations would permit the opening of first class mail without any showing of probable cause, a search warrant or anything beyond the belief of a postal clerk that the mail should be opened and inspected.

"The Post Office," said Wolf, "has always had the right to turn over to customs any incoming mail that looks suspicious." "In the past, customs had to seek permission from the intended receiver to open such mail. That requirement

stem from the flow of pornographic material and lottery information from overseas. vacy of the mails is prohibited.

Childs wrote that one question being asked concerning the regulations is whether, under the Universal Postal Union and America's bilateral postal treaties with most countries, invasion of the privacy of the mails is prohibited. Another question, he wrote, is who inspired the change. "Those long familiar with the procedures feel that the initiative came from above, either from the Department of Justice or the White House," Childs said.

is done away with in the new regulations. But no postal clerk opens any mail. It is turned over to customs."

One Question

Wolf said the regulations

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