

Mail to Hill Gets X-Ray Bomb Check

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Postal officials have been quietly X-raying mail of senators and some members of the House in recent months for possible explosives.

"A couple of suspicious" packages have been turned over to the Capitol police bomb squad and found harmless.

The Senate screening started on a full scale, including checking of letters to committees, after a letter bomb explosion at the British embassy here critically injured a woman employee last summer.

House postal officials, acting at the request of the Secret Service, installed an X-ray machine in 1972 after John G. Schmitz, then a Republican congressman from California, became the American Independent Party candidate for President.

A spokesman said only Schmitz' mail was screened at that time, but after the outbreak of the Arab-Israeli war in October, mail to the 16 Jewish members of the House, along with that of the leadership of the House, was processed through the machine.

The X rays can detect metal or plastic in letters and packages.

"It's strictly a security measure that we instituted as world and domestic conditions changed." A House spokesman said.

His Senate counterpart said: "We always did fluoroscope the Vice President's mail. But after the British embassy incident we put everyone's mail through the process."