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CIA Bares New Aspect Of Data Use

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The Central Intelligence Agency shared information with the FBI that it had received about an American citizen from a wiretap conducted by a foreign source, according to court records.

The admission by the CIA is the first public disclosure that the agency shares electronic surveillance information that it receives from foreign countries about Americans, according to several attorneys. The foreign intelligence agency previously was known to share with the FBI information gathered abroad by its own agents and sources.

The CIA did not originally disclose even to the FBI that the information was obtained by a foreign government's wiretap, a procedure some attorneys described as "potentially deceitful." They said this might be so because in such situations Justice Department attorneys can tell courts they have no wiretap information about an individual when they actually have unwittingly received such information from the CIA.

Former CIA counterintelligence chief James Angleton

testified before Congress earlier this year that "any information" the CIA has on a U.S. citizen is passed on to the FBI "on a daily basis. It's up to the FBI to determine if it is necessary."

In American federal courts, the existence of wiretap information generally must be disclosed upon request so the legality of the tap can be determined. If the Justice Department says it has no such information, the inquiry ends in most cases.

Although the CIA disclosure was filed publicly here this week, the director of the Central Intelligence Agency filed details about the incident under seal with U.S. District Judge Howard F. Corcoran and filed a claim of "secrets of state" privilege in an attempt to halt disclosure of those details.

None of those details could be learned yesterday, such where and when the tap occurred, who the U.S. citizen was or why his telephone lines were tapped or what branch of what foreign government conducted the taps.

The suit which elicited the disclosure was filed last year by the Institute for Policy Studies, a public affairs "think-tank," and three of its leaders, Marcus Raskin, Richard Barnet and Ralph Stavins. The suit charges several former top government officials—but not the CIA—with illegally tapping the telephones of the plaintiffs and the group.

The government has already admitted overhearing the plaintiffs on two different categories of FBI wiretaps, both of which the government claims are legal.