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DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
Washington, D.C.

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**SUBJECT: Diplomatic Communications**

Operational Considerations

The assurance of rapid, secure and dependable channels of communications between the Department of State and the Foreign Service posts abroad is considered to be essential to the proper conduct of U. S. foreign policy and the effective discharge of the Department's assigned responsibilities. In normal circumstances this requirement is met through the use of the diplomatic pouch and associated courier service, through the international mail service, through the international commercial telegraph service and through limited international telegraph channels maintained by the military establishments. Most of the foreign terminals with which the American commercial telegraph carriers connect are government-owned or completely controlled by government administrations. Foreign Service establishments relying upon commercial telegraph facilities are therefore at the mercy of the local government and, more specifically, of the telegraph employees, often Communist-dominated, for communication with the Department.

In direct relation with internal uprisings and disruption of international relations, the demands for speed, security and continuity of our telegraphic communications increase. It has been demonstrated

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demonstrated that the same crises frequently interrupt or seriously hamper the flow of telegraphic communications through the normal channels when our needs are most acute.

Authorized interim solution

Recognizing the intolerability of such a condition in today's world situation, arrangements have been completed, or are actively in progress, to equip the principal missions with emergency transmitting and receiving facilities to be used only when and if normal channels should be completely interrupted. These facilities are of low power, designed to contact base stations already operating in Europe, the Middle East and the Far East. In addition, there are two operating networks, each made up of a small number of mission stations, one in the Middle East and the other in the Far East. These networks handle regular daily traffic. In most cases the facilities have been activated without formal approval of the host government and in certain cases, in direct violation of local regulations to the contrary.

From an operating point of view, it is obviously unsatisfactory to rely upon the dependability of facilities and personnel held strictly in reserve on a standby basis for long periods of time. Far too many delicate parts and operator

techniques

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techniques are involved. Even the regularly operated facilities, installed and maintained on a semi-clandestine basis, fall far short of the desirable optimum of assured communications which could be achieved if the existence of the stations could be formalized on a mutually acceptable basis.

Facts bearing upon the present official position

The single factor which has most effectively hampered the orderly development of a U. S. diplomatic communications service has been our inability to grant reciprocal privilege in the matter, based upon the Department's formal interpretation of that provision of the Federal Communications Act of 1934 under which aliens and representatives of foreign governments may not be licensed to operate radio stations within the United States.

The British have established their diplomatic wireless service on the basis of right of diplomatic and consular representatives to assured communications with their home government. They maintain regularly operated facilities in practically every one of their missions throughout the world. Taking the unqualified position that it is a normal diplomatic right, they also take a liberal view with respect to the operation of such facilities by other nations from their London missions. Numerous other nations, perhaps to some lesser degree, are known to share the same view.

Among

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Among the reasons for which opposition to the granting of reciprocal privilege has developed in the past, the following seem to be outstanding:

1. It represents a potential loss of revenue to the American carriers.
2. It facilitates the transmission of intelligence out of the United States by foreign government representatives.
3. There exists a lack of suitable interference-free frequencies.
4. It is likely to cause interference with other radio services in this country.

There is considerable evidence to indicate that the advantages to be realized by this government through such diplomatic radio operation materially outweigh the possible disadvantages individually and collectively. Treating them in order, it does not appear that the American carriers would suffer intolerable losses of revenue. The amount of U. S. Government business diverted from the American carriers to such facilities would be exceedingly small and, with the limitations on power, operating hours and frequencies contemplated, it would not appear practicable for the other nations collectively to divert an amount of traffic sufficient to represent any real hardship to the carriers.

Considering

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Considering the intelligence factor, the use of diplomatic radio facilities can be interpreted merely as a modern extension of the time-honored right of diplomatic representatives to inviolable communication by diplomatic pouch. The pouch enjoys complete immunity from inspection and, with present international air schedules, offers a very rapid channel for the transmission of practically unlimited quantities of intelligence material. In addition, the foreign missions have open access to the international telegraph service and in some instances are in a position even to lease international radio or cable channels from these carriers and thus gain all the advantages of speed through direct telegraphic transmission. Admitting that their communications filed with the commercial companies are probably more readily available to U. S. Government intelligence analysts than would be the case through radio interception, past experience provides a sound basis for assuming that such foreign missions would be more selective in what they file with a commercial carrier than would be the case in the operation of their own radio circuits. Giving consideration to the fact that in the twilight period prior to the breakdown of diplomatic relations transmissions through the commercial carriers could be intercepted and stopped, any realistic consideration must also recognize the probability that the principal missions with which we are concerned are, even as we, equipped with emergency radio apparatus for the final emergency period.

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The overall frequency problem is very real. With the low power permitted, however, and the low volume intermittent transmissions to be expected, it would not appear to be insoluble. This is confirmed in a large measure by the fact that such networks are operated extensively throughout the rest of the world, including our own two networks, without any serious complication.

The question of interference with other radio activities in the United States is closely allied to the frequency problem and would appear to be resolved on the same basis. A total power allowance in the neighborhood of 500 watts is contemplated with such limitation on hours and method of operation as is proven necessary in each instance. Many times the number of stations which might conceivably develop under the proposed arrangement are regularly operated by licensed amateurs in the Washington area with power allowances up to one kilowatt and with an insignificant amount of interference to any other service.

Action desired

It is not contemplated that the door would be thrown open to one and all to embark on a program of uncontrolled and unlimited radio operation. We envisage, in fact, quite a limited number of cases in which we would open negotiation for such facilities.

It appears eminently desirable however that such steps be taken as are necessary to afford to the Department the ability to enter into such reciprocal agreements and that these steps be taken with the least practical delay.

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