

ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE A1

NEW YORK TIMES
19 November 1985

2 IN CONGRESS SEE LAPSE IN SECURITY IN U.S. RADIO LINKS

By JOEL BRINKLEY
Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Nov. 18 — Drug smugglers had a list of a wide range of sensitive Government radio frequencies, including those used by military aircraft, domestic law-enforcement agencies and Air Force One, according to documents released today by two members of Congress.

Officials say they do not know why drug traffickers would want all the frequencies, where or when they got them or which frequencies, if any, they might have listened in on.

Terrorist Link Is Feared

But Representative Glenn English, Democrat of Oklahoma, and Senator Dennis DeConcini, Democrat of Arizona, said they feared the traffickers may have wanted to monitor the frequencies to help in possible terrorist activities. The two released the list at a news conference today, with the frequencies deleted.

Seized in a Florida drug raid last month were sophisticated radio equipment and a 62-page list of transmission frequencies used by several hundred local, state and Federal agencies, businesses and private organizations.

Many Agencies Involved

Among the frequencies were those used by the Drug Enforcement Administration, Customs Service, Coast Guard, Central Intelligence Agency, Defense Investigative Service, Secret Service and a variety of Army and Air Force installations.

Most of the frequencies can be obtained from public sources, but dozens of them cannot, including the frequencies Secret Service officers use for communicating with each other while protecting the President. The frequencies, some of which are changed occasionally, were current at the time of the seizure.

Many Use Open Lines

Most of the agencies transmit over open, unscrambled lines most or all of the time, officials said.

A Secret Service official said, "We didn't know these frequencies were out like that, but we are aware that when we speak on the radio, it is possible that someone could be monitoring us, so we

are cautious about what we discuss." The official, who spoke on condition he not be identified, said Secret Service officers sometimes use transmitters that include scramblers of low sophistication. But other Federal officials said using the scramblers reduces the transmission range, so in many cases they cannot be used.

The list was found when Florida law officers raided a warehouse in Broward County, just north of Miami, on Sept. 13. They also found machine guns, other weapons, a variety of newspaper clippings and unclassified documents describing Federal drug enforcement equipment and capabilities, and maps and other documents detailing recent drug smuggling operations. No one was arrested in the raid, and no unscramblers were seized.

Mr. English and Mr. DeConcini said they learned that the traffickers who used the warehouse had connections with the M-19 terrorist group in Colombia, which has long been suspected of involvement in drug trafficking.

Citing American intelligence sources whom they did not name, the two said they also learned that M-19 guerrillas had tapped the telephones of the justices of Colombia's Supreme Court before the group raided the Palace of Justice in Bogotá this month. About 100 people, including 11 justices, were killed when Colombian Government forces raided the palace to rout the guerrillas two weeks ago.

With secret American radio frequencies possibly in the hands of M-19, Mr. English said, "this raises some very serious security questions about what their next move might be in the United States."

Mr. DeConcini said: "This not only affects drug trafficking but the security of our nation's leaders. We have to assume that the M-19 has this information because they want to use it."

Some Messages Are Scrambled

In a letter to President Reagan today, urging him to enhance communication security, the two asserted that they had "indisputable evidence" that "criminals actively monitor" numerous secret frequencies.

The Secret Service official said the agency "wants to get more into this area" of securing radio communications, but "with budget constraints and other problems," the new disclosures

"are not going to make us change anything right now."

The list includes the frequency used for telephone communications with the President's limousine, which officials have said are scrambled. But communications from Air Force One, also on the list, have not been scrambled.

This fall, civilian radio operators monitored a conversation between Mr. Reagan in Air Force One and Defense Secretary Caspar W. Weinberger in his own plane as the two discussed the planned interception of an Egyptian plane carrying the hijackers of the cruise ship Achille Lauro.

The Customs Service has spent \$18 million since 1982 enhancing communication security, said Dennis Murphy, a spokesman. "Communications is an area where not all the remedies are in place yet," he added. "But we know where the problems are, and we are working on them."

As part of a new program to hinder Soviet spying in the United States, Mr. Reagan approved a plan recently to enhance significantly the security of Government communications involving national security information. In their letter, Mr. English and Mr. DeConcini urged Mr. Reagan to broaden that effort.

STAT