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SOVIET TELEPHONE BUGGING

However broadly or narrowly the right of privacy is defined, it would seem that any definition should include the right of Americans to be immune from having their telephone conversations listened to by foreign agents.

Yet, apparently Americans do not enjoy that right. The Russian embassy in WAshington, D.C., and the Russian consulates in New York and San Francisco use computers to intercept and record U.S. long-distance te1ephone conversations, oth governmental and pr:vate.

If any anti-Communist government, such as the Republic of China on Taiwan or Chile, engaged in illegal eavesdropping on A erican long-distance telephone conversat1ons, our government would probably indignantly terminate diplomatic relations and close our embassy.

But that doesn't happen when the offender is the Soviet Union, which has been doing exactly that for several years. For a couple of years, the eavesdropping operation was kept secret from the American people, although obviously the Russians knew all about it. Even now, this outrageous conduct is officially de-emphasized.

Our government could stop this illegal listening in on our phone conversations by closing the Soviet embassy and two consulates. Instead, our government has decided to bury the telephone cables underground at a cost of $10 million.

Even this, however, will protect only government phone calls, not private individuals. If citizens want protection from Soviet snooping, that will cost an additional sum.

It is beginning to look as though the Carter Administration will subordinate any other consideration to please the Russians. General Daniel James, Jr.,

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commander in chief of NORAD, was quietly removed from his command after he wrote a letter to the Pentagon criticizing a reorganization study that would eliminate an air defense command.

General James is the highest ranking black officer in military service and had a brilliant combat record as a fighter pilot. He has been transferred to a **base** near Washington "for medical evaluation." The Air Force denies that his letter had anything to do with his being relieved of his NORAD command, but, as columnists Evans and Novak discovered, "scarcely any Air Force officer believes that."

Maybe the reason or the Carter Adrn nistration's tender concern for the sensibilities of the Soviet Union is contained in a recent chart published in FORTUNE magazine that shows the comparison between the United States and the Soviet Uni n in strategic weapons.

The United States has 1,054 intercontinental ballistic missiles, no intermediate-range missiles, 656 submarine missiles, and 490 bombers. The Soviet Union has 1,607 intercontinental ballistic missiles, 600 intermediate-range missiles, 740 submarine missiles, and 955 bombers.

At a recent conference in Moscow attended by Soviet officials, the top Russian mil'tary leaders were ordered to maintain their forces at the highest level of combat readiness. Combat readiness is required by Soviet military doctrine.

Do these start:ing numbers of strategic forces explain why the Carter Administration is afraid to close the Soviet embassy that is bugging our long distance telephone calls? Does that explain why the Carter Administration is afraid to allow one of our most distinguished generals to protest a cutback that he feels is hurtful to our national security?