

FCC chairman suggests expanded wiretap laws in response to the Paris attacks

By Brian Fung and Andrea Peterson, Washington Post

The nation's top telecom regulator recommended broadening America's wiretapping laws Tuesday, in response to the recent attacks in Paris by the Islamic State that left more than 120 people dead.

While the Federal Communications Commission cannot take direct action against the Islamic State, such as shutting down its Web sites or social media accounts, Congress could do "specific things" allowing the FCC to assist law enforcement more effectively, agency Chairman Tom Wheeler told a House subcommittee.

That includes revisiting the wiretap legislation, said Wheeler. The 1994 law, known as the Communications Assistance for Law Enforcement Act, or CALEA, provides for the "lawful intercept" of a suspect's telephone and online communications. It requires telecom companies and Internet providers, not to mention some online voice services, to build their networks in ways that grant authorities easier access to those communications.

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