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Overseas Communications Blacked Out for Almost an Hour in Wide Area

By RICHARD F. SHEPARD

A huge gaseous flare-up on the sun blacked out international wireless communications over half the earth for almost an hour yesterday.

Overseas short-wave circuits and ship-to-shore communications were disrupted. Radio and television broadcasting services here were not affected.

The sunspots affected San Francisco at 11:22 A. M. and New York three minutes later.

Communications concerns were affected for periods ranging from forty minutes to one hour. Veteran wireless men said it was the worst such shutdown in recent years. Scientists reported that the same situation might recur within a day or so.

The last solar intrusion on the air waves occurred on Feb. 23 but it did not cause as complete a blackout as yesterday's. At that time, communications went through spottily for a half-hour.

The American Telephone and Telegraph Company's overseas radiotelephone service here was knocked out for about an hour. R. C. A. Communications, the Mackay Radio and Telegraph Company, Press Wireless, Inc., and the Federal Communications Commission in Washington were affected.

The Air Force Cambridge Research Center at Bedford, Mass., said that its observatory at Sacramento Peak, N. M., had noted tremendous, unusual activity about Feb. 10. Some 200 sun spots, or flare-ups, were recorded from that date until Feb. 24. Some of the spots were the largest and fastest ever seen.

The center explained that yesterday's phenomenon was attributable to the rotation of the sun in the last twenty-eight days so that the turbulent area again faced the earth. They predicted a weaker disturbance on the next rotation and no more after that.

The sunspots disrupt short-wave communications by disturbing the ionosphere, a layer around the earth off which radio signals ricochet en route to their destinations.