



# ***Exploding The Phone***

db146

www.explodingthephone.com

Bibliographic Cover Sheet

Title           **Secret government phone lines can be tapped for just \$60**

Publication    *The Star*

Date            1977-06-21

Author(s)     Langley, Roger

V/I/P           p. 32

Abstract       A convicted blue box user writes his congressman to advise him that the nation's telephone and computer systems are not secure. The GAO investigates and finds this to be true.

Keywords      blue box; Paul McCloskey (congressman, D-Calif.); phone phreaks

Source         An anonymous phone phreak

*The following pages may contain copyrighted material. We believe that our use of this material for non-commercial educational and research purposes constitutes "fair use" under Section 107 of U.S. Copyright Law. If you wish to use this material for purposes that go beyond "fair use," you must obtain permission from the copyright owner, if any. While it will make us slightly sad to do so, we will nonetheless comply with requests from copyright owners who want their material removed from our web site.*

# Secret government phone lines can be tapped for just \$60

HOMEMADE devices that can cheat the phone company on long-distance calls can also be used to tap into top-secret government lines, a confidential federal study reveals.

The devices, called Blue Boxes, are capable of penetrating the phone systems of senators, congressmen, the Pentagon, the CIA and even the White House.

Federal investigators say for as little as \$60, a competent technician can construct a working Blue Box that will tap most government phones.

For about \$1,000, a Blue Box can be built to penetrate the government's classified computer system. And for \$600,000, top-secret satellite communications can be intercepted.

The vulnerability of the government's communication network was first revealed by a convicted Blue Box user.

He wrote Congressman Paul McCloskey (D-Calif.): "Phone freaks have acquired a complete listing of every working WATS number in the Washington, D.C. area, including computer access numbers. One is believed to be the National Crime Information Computer.

"The special hot line for the White House has been discovered. Phone freaks have been able to penetrate this system and talk to key government officials, including the President. Special CIA call-in numbers have also been discovered.

"Communication satellites could very easily be accessed and information picked up. Equipment to pick this up is extremely expensive, but definitely within the price range of organized crime groups and underground radical groups."

McCloskey told THE STAR he turned the letter over to the General Accounting Office.

He said he became convinced the letter was not a hoax after a member of his staff dialed a secret toll-free number that was mentioned in the letter. The number was to a Secret Service agent inside the White House. The GAO

By ROGER LANGLEY

confirms that the phone and computer systems are vulnerable to penetration techniques.

"A perpetrator with adequate technical knowledge and proper equipment can access government systems and interpret some communications," the agency says. "The difficulties for penetration and detection vary among the government systems.

"The system normally does not have security features to protect against either loss, or error in or interception of information."

F.J. Shafer, director of the GAO's logistics and communications system, commented:

"Separate computer access controls should be established by the user when computers and associated remote terminal equipment are interconnected through telephones, regardless of the protection provided by the telecommunications system.

"Such access controls would increase the difficulty in gaining access to computerized data base. Most government telecommunications systems do not provide the degree of security necessary to protect information."

McCloskey, who would not reveal the name of the convicted Blue Box user who alerted him, said the man has offered to help the government solve the problem.

He said the man wrote: "I hereby wish to cooperate with Congress and experts in the field of computers and communications in possibly tightening up the leaky, insecure national telephone network and computer networks."

So far, the government has not taken up the offer, McCloskey's office reports.