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Abstract Captain Crunch arrested by the FBI after an informer sets him up. He is convicted, and forced to tell the FBI all about his methods.

Keywords FBI; Captain Crunch; John Draper; phone phreak; blue box; AUTOVERIFY; AUTOVON; whistle; National Criminal Information Center (NCIS)

Source An anonymous phone phreak

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Captain Crunch

Phone Phreaking For Fun And Info

by Adi Gevins

Several weeks ago, Ma Bell, with the help of the FBI, pinned her most wanted man -- John Draper. Draper, who goes by the name of "Captain Crunch," is the world's most notorious "phone phreak," the celebrated wizard of a small band of geniuses who find transcendental bliss exploring the intricacy of the switching systems of the world and discovering ways to outsmart the all-hearing ear of Big Mother.

Draper was sentenced to three years in federal prison on August 23 for making \$30 worth of free calls with an ingenious electronic device known as the "Blue Box."

Draper's arrest was set up by a former fellow phone-phreak-turned-FBI-informer. He provided the blue box and suggested that Draper make calls from a phone booth which was tapped by the FBI.

Draper was later forced to reveal to the FBI everything he knows about Ma Bell in order to avoid spending the next five years in prison. He managed to maintain his integrity under fire by including in his plea bargaining the provision that he would not have to name names or otherwise act as a snitch. On September 20 Captain Crunch will begin serving four months of a three year sentence. Ironically, the King of Circuits will do his time at Terminal Island in San Diego.

Adam Bauman, the informer who master-minded Draper's arrest, had been in contact with Crunch for a year. "In mid-1975, Bauman, who has strong influential powers and is kind of a trickster personality, began to pull pranks on me," Draper said, "he kept calling me up and enticing me into exchanging techniques with him by throwing out tasty bits of information. He was doing things that real phone phreaks consider to be uncool, like charging calls to other people's numbers and using corporation telephone credit cards."

The corporations which were being billed for Bauman's credit card calls contacted telephone security and the FBI who eventually caught up with him and convinced him to "co-operate" with them rather than risk prosecution. Draper speculated that

as part of his "co-operation" the FBI had Bauman visit him and pump him about several areas of phone phreaking. These included checking out rumors that the infamous Captain Crunch had managed to discover a way to make a blue box tap into AUTOVAN, a military phone network that is independent from the commercial system, a feat that telephone officials maintained was impossible.

During Draper's questioning by the FBI, it became obvious



Captain Crunch got his name from the whistle inside Captain Crunch cereal boxes which he used to trick the ear of Ma Bell's computers.

that Bauman had revealed that Draper had been using AUTOVERIFY, Ma Bell's method of tapping any telephone in her system by overriding the busy signal. This is the system that operators use to check a line or make an emergency interruption. Bauman alleged that phone phreaks were using AUTOVERIFY to tap the FBI's own phone lines. Draper will neither acknowledge nor deny that he has done this, but he admits that anyone with a blue box had the capability of performing that act from 1974 until late-1975 when the phone company redesigned the system.

The FBI was especially upset by Bauman's discovery that Captain Crunch had a copy of the operating manual for the National Crime Information Center's (NCIC) computer. The NCIC is a huge computer which contains information on individual citizens which is gathered by local, state and federal law enforcement agencies. "I didn't particu-

larly have any reason to use it," Draper said, "anyway, I assumed the system was secure. It wasn't until the FBI revealed their extreme paranoia while questioning me that I realized that the system must have some serious holes in it which make it accessible to non-official intrusions."

Draper told the Barb that he had never revealed his techniques for using AUTOVAN and AUTOVERIFY until Bauman successfully probed him on behalf of the FBI, but his attitude has now changed. "I was sitting on a lot of this information for years because it's highly explosive and I didn't want to be responsible for people getting in trouble because of it," he said, "but I've already told the FBI everything, so before I go in I want to spread

blue box to happen."

Draper thinks that the same ingenuity which created the blue box will enable phone phreaks to discover ways to psych out any other system that Ma Bell's minions might devise. The new phone system (which will be completed by 1978) will be run by microprocessors, very small and efficient computers developed during the last few years. "You can just go down to a computer store," Draper said, "and purchase yourself a microprocessor for \$400. Then you can program that computer to signal phone calls for you."

If you can stretch your imagination to an even larger scale, Captain Crunch can foresee groups of phone phreaks getting together to build earth stations capable of picking up national and international telephone conversations which are relayed by communication satellites.

"The most advanced thing I can imagine, and this is just speculation, would be building earth stations," he remarked. "Everything you need to build one is readily available: all you need to know is the proper frequencies, and that's published information, you can get it from the FCC.

my knowledge around as much as possible."

Draper assumes that the information he has provided the FBI will be used to correct the flaws in AUTOVAN and AUTOVERIFY which made them accessible to phone phreaks. He also informed the Barb that the phone company is in the process of changing its system to make it impenetrable to blue boxes.

We asked Draper if he could predict what effect these developments would have on the future of phone phreaking. "They're just going to escalate to higher technology," he replied. "Let's look at the trends in the past. Back in the early-Sixties you could call any number you wanted just by using the kind of whistle that you could get in a box of Captain Crunch cereal, or by whistling the proper pitch into the phone. They had to do something about that, so they developed more complicated equipment, that's what caused the

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