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Title **PTT fighting phone ripoffs with taps**

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Abstract Sanford Herschel Kosman arrested for blue box fraud in Marin, CA;
article details blue box detection and investigation methods, also
mentions 7 page blue box manual and that box was purchased for \$325.

Keywords Sanford N. Kosman (actually Sanford Herschel Kosman) (arrested); San
Rafael, CA; Marin County, CA; blue box

Source An anonymous phone phreak

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PTT fighting phone ripoffs with taps

By Robert Hollis

Ma Bell may be tapping your phone—though the telephone company doesn't like to call it that—if investigators think you're a Phone Phreak.

That pay phone down the street may be tapped as well, if company sleuths suspect someone is using his "blue box" there to defraud Pacific Telephone out of long distance toll charges.

It is a technological fact of life that when the nation's telephone system was automated more than a decade ago it became vulnerable to electronic larceny.

With the disappearance of the long distance operator a small coterie of usually young electronic wizards has been using the system's technology to outwit the billing computers.

They were dubbed Phone Phreaks and Ma Bell's gumshoes went after them with a vengeance.

On Friday, Marin County

sheriff's deputies caught an alleged Phone Phreaker.

The arrest, however, revealed some of the telephone company's newest anti-Phreaker techniques. Central among these is the use of tapping devices on selected phone lines.

A Pacific Telephone spokesman insisted yesterday that the new equipment isn't listening in on conversation. Rather it keeps track of calls—to whom and for how long—from the phones of suspected customers.

Not only that, but it's legal under both state and federal laws, according to the company spokesman.

When deputies armed with a search warrant walked into Sanford N. Kosman's San Rafael home Friday morning, they found the Phone Phreaker's standard tool: a "blue box" according to sheriff's Sgt. Garrett N. McDonald.

It looks something like a transistor radio with piano keys. It is essentially a variable pitch sound generator.

The user presses the key to create tones identical to the "bleeps" one hears when a long distance call is being routed through the telephone company's automatic switching equipment.

After dialing a toll-free long distance number—such as information or one of the 800 area code series—the Phreaker punches out a code on his blue box and reroutes the call to another desired number.

Phreakers became adept enough to place calls almost anywhere there are phones. McDonald said Kosman made calls to India, Japan, Salt Lake City and San Diego regularly.

There are two clues which can lead to the arrest of Phreaks, the phone company spokesman said.

First, Ma Bell's computers record every long distance call from every phone. When one person makes what seems like an unusually large number of calls to toll-free numbers, telephone company investigators may

tap his line.

The tap is activated by a 2600 cycle per second tone. "Your home phone isn't supposed to give out that signal," the spokesman said.

The tone is used exclusively at major company switching centers and is the key to breaking into long distance circuits.

"The device," said the spokesman, "picks up pulses and records the number called and the duration of the call."

Pacific Telephone—and other companies in the Bell System—"have ways to de-

termine if a pay phone is being used," the spokesman added. Details, however, are still confidential, he added.

No estimate was made yesterday of the amount of tolls lost to Phone Phreaks. "It has been a sufficiently large enough loss that we go to a great deal of trouble to track it down," the Pacific Telephone spokesman said.

Company officials agree that the taps will not eradicate the Phreaker phenomenon. "You can be sure they're working on something new right now. They enjoy the contest of outwitting the phone company."