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Title **Bell Launches International Probe of Use of 'Blue Box' to Make Toll-Free Calls**

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Abstract Kenneth Spacil, Robert Helms, Francis Mitchell, and Mrs. Helen Williams arrested for blue box fraud in PA. Brief discussion of international phone phreaking.

Keywords Kenneth Spacil (arrested); Robert Helms (arrested); Francis Mitchell (long lines employee, arrested); Helen Williams (Mrs., toll operator, arrested)

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Bell launches international probe of use of 'blue box' to make toll-free calls

PHILADELPHIA (UPI) — An Englishman scurrying through a London railroad station can't resist the impulse and picks up a public telephone he hears ringing.

The shocked Britisher hears the voice of a person who claims to be calling from the United States. The two have a brief chat, exchange pleasantries about the weather and politics, and then hang up.

A "Phone Phreak" has struck again.

Using a sophisticated electronic device called a "blue box" the American has used long distance telephone wires for a toll-free call — and the Bell Telephone Co. doesn't like it

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The company here yesterday announced the arrest of four Chester County area residents — including two company employees — and said it is launching an international investigation into the phone phreaks.

"This is not a question of fun and games anymore," Pennsylvania Bell President Wil-

liam Cashel said. "It's truly a question of fraud."

Bell officials estimate the "phone phreaks" making toll-free calls nationwide cost telephone companies at least \$500,000 in the past two years.

The gadgets cost only about \$20 to make, but Carl Teets, Bell's security manager here, said they are highly sophisticated electronic devices developed by "quite intelligent" inventors.

He said the telephone company has become concerned because about 50 to 60 phreaks have organized to use the devices and teach others.

"If enough of these people work together they could tie up entire towns," he said.

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He's also concerned professional criminals might move in to use the devices.

In addition to the initial arrests Teets said 57 other cases are being investigated in 14 states and Great Britain.

Those arrested in Pennsylvania were Francis E. Mitchell, 27, of Devon, a seven-year employee of the long-lines department of the American Telephone and Telegraph Co. Pennsylvania Bell's parent firm; Mrs. Helen Williams, 43, of West Chester, a toll traffic operator at Bell's West Chester office; Kenneth M. Spacil, 18, of Glen Moore, and Robert Helms, 18, of Downingtown.

An unidentified 17-year-old college student also was being sought.

Those arrested were charged with toll fraud.