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Title           **AT&T admits recording calls to check fraud**

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# AT&T admits recording calls to check fraud

From AP and UPI Dispatches

WASHINGTON — The nation's biggest telephone company disclosed yesterday that it records portions of some telephone calls to gather evidence of fraud and that during the 1960's it recorded at least 1.5 million calls to combat unlawful use of telephones.

H. W. William Caming, an American Telephone and Telegraph Co. attorney specializing in industrial security, told a House subcommittee that fraudulent evasion of telephone charges, through electronic devices, could produce staggering losses if not countered.

Coming acknowledged reports that the company, from 1976 to 1970, randomly monitored approximately 30 million calls, tape-recording 1.5 million of them for analysis.

The recording was done in Detroit, Los Angeles, New York, Newark, Miami and St. Louis, he said, and the tapes were analyzed in New York City by a special staff for evidence of illegal activity.

Of the 1.5 million recorded, at least 25,000 were probably illegal calls. Caming told reporters after testifying before the House Judiciary Committee's subcommittee on courts, civil liberties and the administration of justice.

the need to monitor the calls, he said, was prompted by the advent of so-called blue boxes and black boxes, electronic devices allowing their users to place toll-free calls around the world and receive calls free of charge to the calling party.

The devices can be produced for no more than \$50 each and sell for up to \$3,500, Caming said.

"These devices have a unique appeal to the criminal element, whether it be a member of organized crime or an unethical businessman," Caming said. "Not only may payment of the lawful charges be evaded, but also any record of the communication concealed."

The attorney defended the company's decision to monitor the calls on grounds it is obliged under laws to insure that all telephone users are billed equally.

Caming also said that before turning to law enforcement authorities, the company wanted to have sufficient evidence for prosecution and that this could only be acquired during the monitoring procedures.

Caming said 270 convictions have been obtained, but did not say how many cases have been prosecuted. He denied that the monitoring practices were illegal or violated privacy.