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**Title**            **Long-distance calls taped, Bell says**

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**Abstract**       Overview of AT&T's toll fraud surveillance program and Michigan Bell's participation in it.

**Keywords**     Michigan Bell Telephone Co. (MB); wiretapping; American Telephone & Telegraph Co. (AT&T); blue box; Kenneth J. Boekeloo (VP, MB); Greenstar

**Notes**          Includes a list of related AP wire stories that appeared in other newspapers.

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## Detroit phones involved in 'illegal activity' check

# Long-distance calls taped, Bell says

By CHESTER BULGIER  
News Staff Writer

Parts of many long-distance calls to and from Detroit telephones were taped by Michigan Bell Telephone Co. during a two-year period beginning in 1965, a company spokesman said yesterday.

The effort, using a special electronic detection device to trace calls determined to be illegal, was part of a surveillance program used in half a dozen large cities across the country between 1964 and 1970.

The Michigan Bell spokesman said the device scanned calls being made on certain trunk lines and was triggered by electronic evidence that

"suspected illegal activity" was going on.

When that happened, he said, the device would tape enough of the call to trace and record the telephones involved.

The technique provided evidence for some prosecutions here, he said, but he did not know how many.

The spokesman said the tapes made in Detroit were forwarded to American Telephone & Telegraph Co. in New York,

and that no one listened to the tapes here.

The St. Louis Post-Dispatch revealed yesterday that the nationwide effort involved the taping of perhaps 1.5 million calls. It said that AT&T regarded only about 25,000 of the calls as illegally placed and that only about 500 cases were confirmed.

The Michigan Bell spokesman said the 500 cases could have involved thousands of

calls, however.

The surveillance campaign came at a time when many persons, particularly young persons, were using a device called the "blue box" to make long-distance calls without paying tolls.

A number of "underground" papers and magazines published diagrams and blueprints for the device, which generated tones allowing the caller to trigger long-distance equip-

ment and make calls without paying.

"The company was being ripped off in amounts of several hundreds of thousands of dollars a year," and it could have cost Michigan Bell millions, said Kenneth J. Boekeloo, Michigan Bell vice-president.

"We were simply protecting our customers against the cheaters."

Boekeloo said the company

violated no laws in taping the calls.

The Michigan Bell spokesman said the taping detection devices are no longer used by the company. He said more sophisticated equipment is now available and "we would use it if it became necessary."

He admitted fraudulent calls remain a problem, "but the percentage of fraud has not grown as rapidly as the total volume of calls."