

Baltimore Charge Of Wiretap Probed

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Baltimore State's Attorney Milton B. Allen said yesterday that his office is investigating allegations of illegal wiretaps on the office and home telephones of the Baltimore Sun's police reporter, Roger Twigg.

"We want to know what happened," said Allen. "We want to know if it amounts to a crime or not. Theoretically it could be a legal tap."

The investigation comes at a time when Maryland Gov. Marvin Mandel must decide whether to sign or veto a controversial new state wiretap bill passed at the tailend of its session that ended last month.

The bill, which some say provides adequate safeguards against abuse but which others say is too far-reaching, would allow the attorney general or state's attorney to seek court authorization for wiretaps lasting up to 45 days when investigating certain crimes such as murder, organized gambling and narcotics selling.

Mandel gave no indication at a press conference yesterday whether he might sign or veto the bill. If signed, it would go into effect July 1.

Del. Charles A. Docter (D-Montgomery) said yesterday

that he opposes the signing of the bill because it is "too broad-reaching."

Docter said that under the state's present wiretap provisions, the only information obtained by wiretap that can be used is that pertaining to alleged crimes specified before the tap was installed. Under the new bill, Docter said, any criminal information obtained by a wiretap can be used against an individual whether or not authorities specified beforehand that they were specifically looking for that information.

"It's sort of like a cancer when you let these wiretaps go," said Docter.

In the Sun case, Twigg said he thinks the apparent taps on his phones were placed there as part of a city police department effort to uncover his sources within the department. Police deny the charge.

The apparent tap on the Sun's office telephone was found when a Sun reporter in the police press room said he overheard on a telephone a tap of a conversation he had had on the same telephone minutes before with another reporter in the Sun's newsroom concerning a fire.