Mandel Orders Phone Taken Out of His Office

No Evidence Is Found of Monitoring

By Richard M. Cohen
Washington Post Staff Writer

ANNAPOLIS, Nov. 17—Maryland Gov. Marvin Mandel said today that there is "no evidence" that a "hot line" phone placed in his office by the federal government was ever used to monitor conversations.

Nevertheless, Mandel said, "The possibility does exist and it exists right now that it could be used for that purpose."

Mandel said he was having the phone taken out of his office, to be placed at state police headquarters.

The phone, similar to ones supplied 42 other statehouses, is designed to link the nation's governors with civil defense and military officials in the event of an emergency. It was placed in the office in 1966, when J. Millard Tawes was governor.

Mandel said he was told by telephone company officials that his phone was identical to those supplied the other governors but that his phone had been wired improperly so that it could function as a transmitting device even when cradled.

As a result, many of the nation's governors had their phones checked today. None reported that their "hot line" phones were bugged but Georgia's Lester Maddox settled all speculation by personally ripping the phone out of the wall.

"Whoever is responsible for

Associated Press

Edward Boyle, a counter-measures technician, explains to Maryland Gov. Marvin Mandel how a civil defense phone could be used to monitor calls in office.

this ought to be imprisoned for life or deported," Maddox said as television cameras whirred.

Further south, Florida Gov. Claude Kirk, reported that he kept his "hot line" phone by his bedside. "If they're going to listen there, they can write some love story," Kirk said.

According to Mandel, the discovery was made Oct. 27 that his phone, situated under a table behind his desk, could serve as a listening device. Mandel said that Edward Boyle, a counter-measures technician for a private eves-dropping detection firm, insisted on examing the phone during a routine check.

Mandel, who one aide described as being "nearly paranoid" about bugging, said he checks his office "once or twice a week, sometimes once every two weeks, sometimes three times in two weeks for the purpose of determining whether there were any so-called listening devices, bugs or anything of that nature."

In 1968, Mandel ordered the state house canvassed for listening devices after one had been found there.

See PHONES, B18, Col. 1

PHONES, From B1

Mandel said he did not know if a federal investigation into the phone incident was in progress but added that he was not conducting an inquiry at the state level.

"What can I investigate?" He asked. "It was designed out of AT&T in New York. The only thing local was the man who put it in."

He said he was told that the phone was mistakenly wired and he had to leave it at that. He said, "There's nothing I can say about it. It was a mistake in the wiring. But there's been an awful lot of mistakes made."

In Army Intelligence

When Boyle asked to check the red phone, Mandel said he told the technician it wasn't necessary because the phone never had been used.

Boyle, who was present at today's statehouse press conference, said he insisted on checking the phone because he "likes to be thorough." Boyle said he was trained in his field during nine years service in Army intelligence.

"It was rather obvious that the two white leads were wired directly across the monitoring cord," Boyle said.

According to Mandel, Boyle said at the time, "This is a live microphone. This telephone is live at all times, 24 hours a day; it's like a transmitter."

Doubt 'Deliberate' Plan

Mandel said he then summoned telephone company security personnel, who confirmed Boyle's finding. Then, Mandel said, he called nearby governors to see if their phones were identical. He reached Delaware Gov. Russell Peterson and had Boyle check that phone, too. Boyle said Peterson's phone also could function as a listening device.

Boyle said he doubted if the phone was intentionally wired to serve as a listening device. He said an intentional effort to monitor Mandel's office conversations would not have been "that obvious."

"As I say, and the governor stresses it too, we doubt if it was deliberate."

Both Boyle and Mandel contested the statement of a telephone company official who said Monday that the wire leading from the phone could only be tapped from within the statehouse. The phone company official said a device on the terminal in the basement would have blocked the signal from that point on.

"Once it got beyond the statehouse it would be very difficult," Boyle said. "But with the proper filters and amplifiers it could be done. It could be done, but it would almost take a laboratory to do it."

However, he added, the line could have been tapped from within the statehouse with equipment costing about $50. The building's two terminals had been unlocked until two months ago.

Terminals Locked

Mandel said he had a closet containing the phone terminals locked after he had a state trooper take a course at the Army's intelligence school at Ft. Holabird, Md.

"From what he learned up there," Mandel said, "I became a little frightened."

Mandel said he still did not know what would happen if he picked up the phone. When he demonstrated the phone for reporters, he kept his finger on the disconnect buttons.

"I haven't the slightest idea" of where the phone goes, Mandel said. "All I know is that it goes to a terminal in the basement. After that it's classified."

He said he had asked phone officials about the phone and was told that the information was classified.

3 Connection Points

According to a Pentagon spokesman for the Civil Defense Administration, the phones of the 42 governors are connected to three points: An underground center within Cheyenne Mountain, Colorado, which is headquarters for the North American Air Defense Command; a two-story underground building in Denton, Tex., and a classified location "outside Washington."

In 1966, the approximately 1,600-phone system was offered to the nation's governor's, some of whom, the spokesman said, complained after the Cuban missile crisis that they were not being kept informed.

The spokesman said that the American Telephone & Telegraph Co., which installed most of the phones, was conducting a survey of all the phones in governor's offices. The report will be ready later today.

At one point, Mandel was asked in his office if he had been in contact with Maryland's previous governor, Vice President Spiro T. Agnew.

"Not that he knows of," an aide replied, glancing at the red phone.