Court-Backed Wiretaps Rise In Area in 1970, Study Shows

By David R. Boldt

Washington Post Staff Writer Use of court-authorized wiretaps and electronic surveillance in criminal cases in Washington and surrounding Maryland counties expanded sharply in 1970 over 1969, a report to Congress from the administrative office of the U.S. courts shows.

The increased local use of wiretaps and other listening devices mirrored national figures in the report, which was required under the 1968 Omnibus Crime Act.

Nationally, the number of instances in which law enforcement authorities were authorized to use electronic surveillance, including wiretaps, rose to 597 in 1970 from 304 in 1969.

The total includes authorizations made by federal courts Report Disproves Fear and state courts - in those states that have wiretap laws in criminal cases, but doesn't include taps and bugs used in connection with national security cases.

The report showed nine instances of court-ordered wiretaps in 1970 in the District of Columbia compared with two in 1969. All the 1970 cases were related to narcotics or gambling, the report indicated, and seven were related to arrests made during the year.

Maryland Increase

In Maryland, there were 28 authorizations last year, up from 16 in 1969. Of the 1970 authorizations, four were from federal courts and 24 from state courts.

In 1970, Maryland state courts authorized 10 phone taps in Prince George's five for Prince Georges' and \$56,500. none for Montgomery in 1969, agents listened to a telephone proximately \$150,000, most of All but two of the 1970 cases for 31 days and monitored 385 it in pay for the personnel in the two counties involved conversations involving 23 per- manning the taps, who lisgambling.

The report showed one federally authorized wiretap in Virginia in 1970-a gambling case-and none in 1969. Virginia law doesn't give state courts the power to authorize wiretaps.

Speaking on the Senate floor earlier this week Sen. John L. McClellan (D-Ark.) said that his Criminal Laws and Procedures Subcommittee would begin a study of state and federal wiretapping and other electronic surveillance procedures, with, hearings probably to be scheduled this fall.

But McClellan said that the report proved wrong those who had predicted "widespread and promiscuous use of wiretaps and bugs by law enforcement authorities; they said it was neither effective, nor highly productive; now they are being made to eat their words."

The report doesn't identify the specific cases in which each authorization applies.

It includes extensive information, however, on the number of conversations overheard and the cost of setting up and monitoring the taps.

County and six in Montgom-ery County, compared with tap, in narcotics case, cost rested. Law enforcement sons. Of these, 136 conversa tened to a total of 2,832 con-

The nine D.C. cases cost aptions were "incriminating," ac-cording to the report, and 22 400 people.