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A Far-Out Development In Wiretaps

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A breakthrough in electronic listening devices, permitting any home or office to be bugged and tapped without entering it, was disclosed by a wiretap expert at a conference of federal law enforcement and security investigators.

The device can be placed anywhere on a line leading to the phone to be tapped — on telephone poles, in underground cable vaults, or in telephone company switching offices miles away. It picks up both telephone calls and conversations in the room where the phone is installed, even when the receiver is on the hook.

This feature, said government bugging experts who were queried after the conference, would make it unique.

USE

According to Clyde Wallace, a bugging equipment manufacturer who disclosed the development, the device is already being used by two federal investigative agencies.

Wallace described the device at a recent symposium here of the Association of Federal Investigators. Others on the three-day agenda were officials of the Justice Department, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs, and Treasury Department.

Spokesmen for the FBI and Central Intelligence Agency declined to comment on whether their agencies were the ones alluded to by Wallace in his speech as using the device.

The FBI has primary responsibility for court-approved wiretapping, which is interception of telephone calls, and bugging, which is monitoring of room conver-

sations through electronic devices. The CIA conducts extensive electronic surveillance outside the United States and is not supposed to operate domestically unless the matter is related directly to its foreign intelligence work.

SURPRISE

After his speech, Wallace expressed surprise and some dismay that a reporter had been present while he talked. He declined to answer any questions on the new device.

During the speech, however, Wallace described it as the first method for simultaneously tapping a phone and

bugging the room where it is installed without tampering with the phone or even going near the premises.

To tap and bug a phone, he said, the device is placed anywhere on the telephone line running to it. It then emits a radio frequency, which trips a switch in the phone. This switch normally prevents telephone conversations in the room from traveling over the telephone wire. When it is bypassed by the signal, the phone becomes an open microphone, transmitting both room conversations and telephone calls.

Normal phone calls can be made while the device is in operation, according to Wallace, who said he is developing his own version of the device.

SWITCH

Last year, a cutoff switch was found by an electronics expert to be bypassed on the Civil Defense telephone in the office of Maryland Governor Marvin Mandel, making the phone capable of transmitting conversations from Mandel's office. The telephone company attributed the situation to a wiring error.

Other devices, called infini-

ty transmitters or "harmonica" bugs, can bug and tap phones simultaneously — but they all require physical entry to permit rewiring of the phone or installation of a bug.

Government bugging experts interviewed said no public mention had been made before of a device that would not require entry. Several expressed surprise at the development.

However, Bernard Fensterwald, former chief counsel of former Senator Edward E. Long's subcommittee on administrative practice and procedure, which held extensive hearings on government surveillance, said he has had information for some time from non-public disclosures during the committee's investigation that security agencies, such as the CIA, use such a device.

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