

SF Examiner

Bell accused

FEB 2 1975

of illegally tapping phones

ST. LOUIS — At least 1.5 million long-distance calls from six cities were illegally recorded by the Bell Telephone System in an attempt to detect toll frauds, the St. Louis Post-Dispatch reported today.

Calls originating from St. Louis, New York, Detroit, Miami, Los Angeles and Newark, N. J., were recorded during a six-year period, the paper said.

In 1970, Bell executives halted the practice when they were warned that the company's image might be damaged if the public learned of the monitoring, the Post-Dispatch said.

Tape recordings of toll calls included segments of from 30 to 90 seconds, the newspaper said. But fewer than 500 of 1.5 million calls recorded were confirmed as fraudulent.

The press relations director for the American Telephone & Telegraph Co., William Mullane, said the monitoring took place to detect devices that would bypass long distance tolls.