



NEWS RELEASE

Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts

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Wiretaps Increased in 2001, With Majority Tied to Drug-Related Investigations

Federal and state courts authorized a total of 1,491 wiretap applications in 2001, a 25 percent increase over 2000. Federal judges approved 1 percent more applications in 2001, for a total of 486; while state judges in 24 states approved 1,005 or 41 percent more applications in 2001. Seventy-eight percent of all applications for intercepts in 2001 cited drug offenses as the most serious offense under investigation.

These and other statistics are in the *2001 Wiretap Report*, A Report of the Director of the Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts on Applications Orders Authorizing or Approving the Interception of Wire, Oral, or Electronic Communications. A summary report on authorized intercepts is attached. The complete *2001 Wiretap Report* and reports from previous years are available on the Judiciary's website at www.uscourts.gov/wiretap.html.

Although the number of wiretaps increased in 2001, wiretaps were in operation on average 9 percent fewer days per wiretap than in 2000. The number of communications intercepted in each wiretap also fell, dropping 12 percent. The average length of an original authorization was 27 days, down one day from the 28 days reported in 2000. But more extensions, which were up 9 percent, were requested and authorized in 2001.

Sixty-eight percent, or 1,007, of all intercepts authorized specified "portable device carried by/on individual" as the location of the wiretap device. "Personal residence" was the next most specified location, and was authorized in 206 wiretaps, with 4 percent of all wiretaps authorized for business establishments. Phone wire communication was the most common type of surveillance, with landline, cellular, cordless and mobile telephones accounting for 83 percent of all intercepts installed.

Wiretaps were most frequently authorized to investigate violations of drug and gambling laws, with racketeering as the third most frequently noted offense category cited on wiretap orders. Homicide/assault was the fourth most reported offense. Of the wiretaps authorized in 2001, 1,167 cited drug offenses as the most serious offense under investigation,

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82 cited gambling, 70 racketeering, and 52 cited homicide/assault as the most serious offense under investigation. Federal wiretaps to conduct drug investigations were most common in the Central District of California, the Northern District of Illinois, and the Western District of Texas.

Finally, as of December 31, 2001, a total of 3,683 persons had been arrested based on interceptions of wire, oral or electronic communications reported as terminated in 2001, 732 of whom were convicted.

Each federal and state judge is required to file a written report with the Director of the Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts on each application for an order authorizing the interception of a wire, oral, or electronic communication. Reports are filed after the expiration of the court order and any extensions. Prosecuting officials who applied for interception orders are required to submit reports to the AO on all orders that were terminated during the previous calendar year. No report to the AO is required when an order is issued with the consent of one of the principal parties to the communication, or for the use of a pen register, unless the pen register is used in conjunction with any wiretap devices whose use must be reported.

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Table 7
Authorized Intercepts Granted Pursuant to
18 U.S.C. 2519 as Reported in Wiretap Reports
for Calendar Years 1991 - 2001

Wiretap Report Date	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
Intercept applications requested	856	919	976	1,154	1,058	1,150	1,186	1,331	1,350	1,190	1,491
Intercept applications authorized	856	919	976	1,154	1,058	1,149	1,186	1,329	1,350	1,190	1,491
Federal	356	340	450	554	532	581	569	566	601	479	486
State	500	579	526	600	526	568	617	763	749	711	1,005
Avg. days of original authorization	28	28	28	29	29	28	28	28	27	28	27
Number of extensions	601	646	825	861	834	887	1,028	1,164	1,367	926	1,008
Average length of extensions (days)	29	30	29	29	29	28	28	27	29	28	29
Location of authorized intercepts*											
Personal Residence	439	441	410	451	428	434	382	436	341	244	206
Business	144	119	124	118	101	101	78	87	59	56	60
Portable device	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	719	1,007
Multiple locations	89	70	92	97	115	149	197	222	287	109	117
Not indicated or other*	184	289	350	488	414	465	529	584	663	62	101
Major offense specified											
Arson, explosives, and weapons	-	-	-	-	4	-	3	3	8	5	5
Bribery	16	8	1	6	4	10	13	9	42	21	1
Extortion (includes usury and loansharking)	2	7	9	8	18	9	24	12	11	10	28
Gambling	98	66	96	86	95	114	98	93	60	49	82
Homicide and assault	21	35	28	19	30	41	31	55	62	72	52
Larceny and theft	17	16	13	18	12	7	22	19	9	15	47
Narcotics	536	634	679	876	732	821	870	955	978	894	1,167
Robbery and burglary	2	-	-	6	5	4	5	4	4	4	8
Racketeering	114	90	101	88	98	105	93	153	139	76	70
Other or unspecified	50	63	48	47	60	38	27	28	37	44	31
Intercept applications installed**	802	846	938	1,100	1,024	1,035	1,094	1,245	1,277	1,139	1,405
Federal	349	332	444	549	527	574	563	562	595	472	481
State	453	514	494	551	497	461	531	683	682	667	924
For intercepts installed											
Total days in operation	30,002	32,430	39,819	44,500	43,179	43,635	48,871	53,411	63,243	47,729	53,574
Avg. number of persons intercepted***	121	117	100	84	140	192	197	190	195	196	86
Average number of intercepted communications***	1,584	1,861	1,801	2,139	2,028	1,969	2,081	1,858	1,921	1,769	1,565
Average number on incriminating intercepted communications***	290	347	364	373	459	422	418	350	390	402	333
Authorizations for which costs reported	775	829	912	1,042	983	1,007	1,029	1,184	1,232	1,080	1,327
Average cost of intercepts for which costs reported (in dollars)	45,033	46,492	57,256	49,478	56,454	61,436	61,176	57,669	57,511	54,829	48,198
Intercept applications authorized but reported after publication****	85	47	206	46	81	48	90	118	195	161	-
Total authorized by year (reported through Dec 2001)	941	966	1,182	1,200	1,139	1,197	1,276	1,447	1,545	1,351	1,491

* Starting in 2000, location categories were revised to improve reporting and reduce the number of instances "other" location was reported.

** Installed intercepts include only those intercepts for which reports were received from prosecuting officials.

*** As of 1998, the average excludes those reports in which the number of persons intercepted, the number of intercepts, or the number of incriminating intercepts was not reported or could not be determined.

**** Some wiretaps terminated in a given year are not reported until a subsequent year because they are part of ongoing investigations.