

Seized tracking gear not 'high tech' — FBI

By Bob Sklar
staff writer

Expensive tracking and transmission equipment seized after four days of surveillance at two Farmington Hills hotels over the New Year's holiday is not overly sophisticated, according to a preliminary FBI report.

"It's not high tech. It's not something that has flagged us into a full-fledged foreign counter-intelligence investigation at this time," said Robert Mott, special agent with the FBI's Detroit office.

"We don't want to promote this as a big spy case," Mott added. "It's much too early to say we're involved in a spy investigation."

The \$15,000 worth of equipment, seized by Farmington Hills police from three men claiming to be Israeli Jan. 4, was sent to the FBI Technical Services Division in Washington for analysis. The Federal Communications Commission proba-

bly will take part in the analysis, Mott said.

The seized equipment is the type used in criminal activity ranging from drug trafficking to kidnapping to foreign counterintelligence. It also has legal applications, Mott said.

POLICE SEIZED the equipment because of the suspicious actions of the three men, who were under surveillance while one was staying at the Clarion Hotel and two were staying nearby at the Dillon Inn.

Sgt. Charles Nebus believes the men "had to be doing some sort of surveillance or covert activity, just based on the kind of equipment they had."

The men consented to the search and seizure. "We had probable cause to believe they were involved in illegal activity," Chief William Dwyer said.

No crime has been established. "We're not sure possession of the

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equipment, itself, is a crime," Mott said.

The three men — one 39, the other two in their 40s — gave California addresses when police questioned them the morning of Jan. 4.

Police aren't sure they have the proper identity of two of the men, who spoke little English. But they had forms of identification. No one has stepped forward to claim ownership and ask to have the property returned. The property will be re-

turned if police determine it was not being used illegally, Dwyer said.

Although police initially thought the men may be drug traffickers, no drugs, money or guns were found in their possession.

"They offered no explanation for the suspicious activity. What little information they did provide was conflicting or it was disputed by what our surveillance had indicated," Nebus said.

ON NEW Year's eve, police were alerted to three men sitting in a car for 90 minutes outside the Clarion Hotel.

Because so much drug trafficking takes place around hotels and motels, police decided to watch them, Nebus said.

"All of their activity was consistent with what looked like drug trafficking — clandestine meetings, suspicious activity, looking into car trunks. One of them even flew out of this area and flew back the next day while the other two stayed behind," Nebus said.

The two men at the Dillon Inn parked at a nearby shopping center, not in the hotel lot. And the man at the Clarion Inn made several long calls from a lobby pay phone, Nebus said.

WHEN IT appeared the men were about to depart, police moved in. Mid-morning on Jan. 4, they stopped one man from the Dillon

Inn, driving a rental car with Michigan plates, at Nine Mile and Farmington Road. From him, they seized a mobile phone/radio believed used to talk back and forth over special frequencies.

They stopped a second man in a car with California plates, outside the Clarion Hotel. Inside the car, registered to one of the men at the Dillon Inn, police found electronic tracking devices, including a receiver and two transmitters (which attach to mobile objects like cars). They also found other surveillance equipment. The car was impounded, but the 39-year-old Tarzana, Calif., man was released after posting \$150 bond for driving with a suspended operator's license.

Soon after, police questioned the third man who had been under surveillance. He was found in his room at the Dillon Inn. Police seized from his room a second mobile phone/radio.

on the agenda

Below are highlights from agendas of government meetings this week. All meetings are open to the public.

Farmington City Council
City Council Chambers
23600 Liberty
8 p.m. Monday, Feb. 8

A public hearing to handle the assessment roll for the city's 1988 Sidewalk Improvement Program will be held, allowing involved residents a chance to speak before council.

The council will also consider a sign variance request from Jerry and Michele Jakacki for the Focal Point Studios, 33431 Grand River, and a fence variance request from Michael Jones, 32700 Cass. Also on the agenda is the transfer of an SDA liquor license at 31822 Grand River, current home of the Savings Spot. Reports from the city administration will include:

- water rates for swimming pools and construction;
- renewal of a taxicab license for Northwest Transport Co.;
- proposed protective clothing for firefighters;
- bids for the roof and office furniture for city hall; and
- proposed purchase of sewer metering equipment.

Quarterly reports from the city's building and water and sewer departments are also on the agenda. Re-appointments to the city's DDA and Construction Board of Appeals will also be considered.

Downtown Development Authority
City Council Conference Room
23600 Liberty
8 a.m. Tuesday, Feb. 7

Discussion is slated on a request from Bertak Building Co. for a zoning change at Mulwood Square shopping center in Farmington Hills, and its impact on downtown Farmington.

Also on the agenda is approval of revised goals and objectives for the downtown board, and approval of a proposed finance plan.

Farmington Board of Education
Schelman Administrative Center
32500 Shilawesee
7:30 p.m. Tuesday, Feb. 7

PTA Reflections Contest award winners will be honored Tuesday night, as elementary children receive their prizes before the school board.

Also on the agenda is the resolution for sale of bonds, and consideration of a recommendation to change the social studies curriculum.

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5. Cut down on total fat intake from animal sources and fats and oils.
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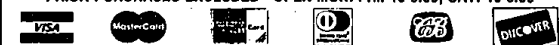
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