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2 February 1993

Office of the Secretary
Federal Communications Commission
Washington DC 20554

RE: ET DOCKET NO. 93-1

Amendment of Parts 2 and 15 to
Prohibit Marketing of Radio Scanners
Capable of Intercepting Cellular
Telephone Conversations

Dear Sirs:

I have read the Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, ET Docket No. 93-1 with interest. I am a police officer with the Prince Georges County Police in Maryland and I have a few concerns which I would like to bring to your attention.

As a police officer I use radio communications constantly in my work as a matter of operational necessity and safety. I have, in my assigned police vehicle, a scanner which I use to not only monitor adjacent sectors in Prince Georges County but also adjacent and nearby jurisdictions. I do this to help me keep appraised of any situations which may affect me.

Police work in and of itself is one in which there is a constant stream of information being given to one an officer. Information comes at a very rapid pace. For example when an officer is in pursuit of a fleeing felon the officer must keep the dispatcher up to date on the situation - location, direction of travel, description, etc. When a police pursuit crosses jurisdictional boundaries the dispatcher has to also advise the affected jurisdiction of the pursuit entering their area. Sometimes this notification is delayed for one reason or another.

Prior to having a scanner in my police vehicle I had the experience of sitting at a light in the early morning hours, about 3:00 AM. While sitting there I saw a vehicle run the red light in the opposite direction at a high rate of speed. Behind that vehicle I was surprised to see a police vehicle from another state behind the car with it's lights and siren going. I advised my dispatcher who informed me that we had not been notified. It was a full 4 minutes before we were officially advised of the pursuit by the other jurisdiction.

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I soon after that bought a scanner for my police vehicle to monitor the neighboring jurisdictions and sectors. Since then I have been able to be more aware of what is happening around me. Even though the delays in inter-jurisdictional notification continue myself and my partners are able to be be better prepared to assist officers from other jurisdictions. An added benefit is that I have also been able to arrive on the scene of medical emergencies before the Emergency Medical Services simply because I hear their calls dispatched and happen to be close to the scene of the incident.

Many agencies surrounding my Department are making moves towards the 800 Mhz frequencies for public safety communications. Several agencies, including Fire/EMS already use these frequencies. In this band the "Cellular Radio Services" allocation is located. This could cause potential problems for police officers who wish to purchase scanners that are able to receive in that band.

Modern scanners consist of semiconductors that are mass manufactured. The same "chips" that go in domestic scanners also go into scanners that are exported. This cuts cost, as the "prohibited bands" are still on the chip but, through the use of other electronic components can be blocked out. These components are inexpensive diodes, resistors, or jumper wires.

As I read the document I noticed the that it is proposed that authorization for any scanner being able to receive the "Cellular Band" be denied. It further states that authorization would be denied any scanner capable of "readily being altered by the user to receive transmissions in such frequencies."

First of all the definition of "readily being altered by the user" needs to be addressed. If the Commission deems it necessary to define this as the chip itself cannot be capable of receiving the Cellular Bands it would force the manufacturers to design another semiconductor chip entirely. In essence there would be one chip for domestic use and one chip for export outside of the United States. This would invariably make the cost of a domestic scanner higher than it is now.

As a Police Officer I do not make a large salary, nor do my co-workers. My Department does not purchase extra radio equipment for it's officers, we do this for the public with our own money. Forcing the manufacturers to make a different scanner for domestic use will hamper myself and other public safety workers in the assistance of other jurisdictions and the public. The increased costs passed on to consumers will make it difficult, if not impossible, for my co-workers in the public safety service to purchase scanners due to the cost. This would in turn hurt the public who we serve.

Respectfully submitted,

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