ELECTRONIC SURVEILLANCE:  
AN ALTERNATIVE TO INCARCERATION*  
[An Overview of the San Diego County Program]  

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ABSTRACT  
This paper discusses the development of electronic monitoring, explains basic functions, discusses applications, provides information on specific equipment, examines test results, and presents a brief overview of the Electronic Surveillance Program (Work Furlough Program) operated by the San Diego County Probation Department. The paper concludes with a synopsis of the major public concerns about electronic monitoring.  

The front page of the July 8, 1987, Los Angeles Times reported that electronic monitoring was being utilized for the first time in Los Angeles to confine a convicted slumlord, a practicing neurosurgeon, to a rat-infested apartment building he owns and rents. In a judge-ordered sentence, believed to be unique, the doctor, labeled the "Rat Lord," was sentenced to house arrest for repeated failure to correct hundreds of violations of the city's ordinances which require a landlord keep rentals in sanitary and livable condition. The term "Rat Lord" was given to the property owner because of the description of various tenants of the large rats that infected his rental properties (Times, July 8, 1987).  

The sentence required that the "Rat Lord" reside in one of his own rental units for thirty days without prior cleanup operations. The apartment building he inhabited was said to be full of cockroaches, fleas, lice, rats, as well as other unsanitary conditions, and a haven for junkies, dope pushers, winos, and street walkers. To ensure that  

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the landlord stayed in the apartment for thirty days without leaving the premise he wore an electronic monitoring device; a bracelet designed to beep and notify parole officials if the doctor strayed more than 150 feet from the building (Times, August 13, 1987). Although this was the first time that such a device has been utilized in Los Angeles, it has been used successfully in other parts of the country, albeit for different reasons, since 1982 as this paper will discuss.

ORIGIN OF HOUSE ARREST

The term house arrest is not a contemporary concept; in biblical times St. Paul the Apostle was placed under "house arrest." In the 1600s, Galileo, the astronomer, lived out the last eight years of his life under house arrest. And, in 1917, the last czar of Russia, Nicholas II, and his family were detained under house arrest until their deaths a year later (Meachum, 1986, p. 102).

House arrest is most readily adaptive to probationary Work Furlough or Work Release Programs; programs which constitute a change of prisoner status, like parole, whereby an offender is allowed to work in the community during the day and generally returns to the place of confinement at night. The concept was first applied in Wisconsin in 1913 but did not receive much support until the 1950s (Dushkin, 1981, p. 304).

Under the Articles of War and the current Uniform Code of Military Justice (1951), U.S. military courts have frequently imposed house arrest. One notable case was the detention (confinement to quarters) of Lt. William L. Calley, Jr. (Rush, 1986, pp. 27-28).

The RAND "Innovations in Probation" survey reported approximately 28 states are currently operating house arrest programs. Georgia's program, the oldest, began in 1982, and the RAND survey revealed that over half of the other programs, nationwide, report modeling themselves after Georgia's program (Petersillia, 1986, p. 51). Oklahoma legislation introduced the term house arrest for the first time in 1985 (Meachum, 1986, p. 108); during that same year, a more innovative Marion County, Indiana, decided to expand its manual home detention program to include both active and passive electronic monitoring (Indiana University, 1987, p. 11).