

Mobile firm trades phones for bandwidth

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An Israeli mobile operator has been trading cell phones for smuggled land lines that interfere with its bandwidth.

Partner Communications keeps a stock of phones, including the state-of-the-art Digital Enhanced Cordless Telecommunications models, to offer people found to be using smuggled phones on the 900 MHz bandwidth, according to a report in the Israeli daily Ha'aretz.

The frequency is close to Partner's, and the presence of even a single phone on this bandwidth can interfere with the cellular company's signal, the newspaper reported.

The sources of the interference are cordless landline phones being smuggled into Israel. According to the report, dozens of such devices have entered the country in the past year, and more are expected to make their way in.

When Partner Communications detects interference with its network, it pinpoints the source and approaches the user, offering to replace the smuggled phone and install it for free, the newspaper said. The report made no mention, however, of Partner alerting the police.

The phenomenon of smuggled phones and illegal bandwidths stems from international long-distance calls, tens of millions of which are made using illegal means, the report said, taking millions of dollars of business away from Israeli phone companies.

The Ministry of Communication shut down 236 pirate frequencies around the country in 2005, according to the report.

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