

Greeks to register prepaid cell phones

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(AP) -- Greece's prepaid mobile phone users will now have to register their identities in a bid to tackle illegal immigration and other crime, the communications minister said Tuesday.

Evripidis Stylianidis said widespread anonymous cell-phone ownership made crime-fighting more difficult.

"The types of criminals who prefer prepaid phones include drug dealers, immigrant smugglers and blackmailers," Stylianidis said.

Prepaid mobiles were also used in an elaborate illegal wiretapping operation that targeted Prime Minister Costas Karamanlis and senior officials in his conservative government during the 2004 Olympics in Athens.

Investigators failed to find who penetrated Greece's [Vodafone](#) network for seven months by hacking legal surveillance software.

SIM cards for prepaid connections are frequently sold for cash at corner stores and supermarkets. Under the new regulations, prepaid connections would not be activated until registered by the owner at the mobile phone operator.

Pending parliament's approval of the legislation, people would be required to register prepaid mobiles by June 30, 2010, Stylianidis said.

He also said tens of thousands of illegal immigrants would not be

allowed to use pay-as-you-go phones under the new scheme.

According to the government, there are an estimated 9 million active prepaid connections in Greece, while 5 million are registered under calling plans.

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