

Creator of StealthGenie Arrested

October 14, 2014/ Kaofeng Lee

A couple weeks ago, Hammad Akbar, the creator of StealthGenie, a mobile application that allows someone to spy on another person's cellphone, was [arrested by the FBI](#). He was arrested on charges of conspiracy, sales of surreptitious interception devices, and advertising a surreptitious interception device. Advertised as a way to keep an eye on cheating spouses, monitor teenage children, and employers, anyone can download and install StealthGenie to monitor all activities on a cell phone.

Other than the computer, the cellphone is one of the most used forms of technology. In fact, according to Pew Internet, [44% of Americans sleep with their phones](#) so they don't miss out on texts or messages. We use our cell phone to organize our lives, search for information (let me google that for you), entertain us, and communicate with others – via text, social media, email, and, sometimes, even a phone call. For many of us, survivors included, our cell phone is our lifeline to help, information, and to other people. Cellphone spyware makes it incredibly easy for abusers and stalkers to monitor the activities and location of survivors through their cell phones.

When abusers are stalking their victims' phones via spyware, it is 24-7 control and abuse. In addition to constant monitoring, abusers often engage in other types of abuse, such as physical abuse, threats, and emotional abuse. The result is that survivors feel completely isolated and cut off from any avenue of help. Everything they say and everything they do is monitored and controlled by the abuser. The trauma and the fear can be overwhelming.

StealthGenie isn't the only monitoring product out there. There are many similar products available, including mSpy, MobiStealth, Spy Bubble. Some of these products are advertised under the guise of protecting your vulnerable children or protecting your liability by monitoring your employees. Some come right out and encourage users to buy their products to "catch your cheating spouse." In reality, abusers and stalkers are buying these products to further terrorize and abuse their victims.

We're glad that the government is cracking down on products that make it easier for abusers to harm victims. For years, when their phones were being monitored survivors would have to get a new phone – a very expensive step – simply to stay safe. Removing these types of products from the market means one less tool for abusers to use to stalk and harass survivors of domestic violence and stalking.

For more information about cell phone safety, visit our [Technology Safety & Privacy toolkit](#). For more information about NNEDV Safety Net's advocacy work on cell phone privacy and safety, watch Cindy Southworth, Vice President of NNEDV's [testimony at the Location Privacy Protection Act of 2014](#) hearing.

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