

Researcher finds snooping smartphone software

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File photo shows a man checking his mobile phone in New York. A smartphone security researcher is shining light on a hidden program that tracks activity on Android, BlackBerry and Nokia handsets.

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Trevor Eckhart exposed the workings of Control IQ in a video available online Wednesday as the California company behind the software defended it as a tool for mobile network operators.

"Our software is designed to help mobile network providers diagnose critical issues that lead to problems such as dropped calls and [battery drain](#)," Carrier IQ said in a press statement.

The company denied the software logged keystrokes or tracked smartphone users.

However, Eckhart's video showed Control IQ software buried deep in an Android-powered smartphone recording buttons pressed, Internet [search queries](#), text messages and locations.

Eckhart typed a text message of "Hello world!" only to have it instantly appear in a Control IQ application log in an [Android](#) phone.

The software was tricky to find on the device and couldn't be turned off, according to his demonstration.

Control IQ had tried to silence Eckhart with a cease-and-desist letter threatening legal action but backed off after lawyers at the [Electronic Frontier Foundation](#) (EFF) went to his defense.

"Mr. Eckhart's legitimate and truthful research is sheltered by both the fair use doctrine and the [First Amendment](#)," EFF senior staff attorney Marcia Hofmann wrote in a response to the Control IQ letter.

Eckhart wanted details regarding why the Control IQ software was vacuuming information about smartphone use and who they shared it with.

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