

Amazon resists request for Echo info in Arkansas slaying

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Amazon is resisting an effort by Arkansas prosecutors to obtain potential recordings from a slaying suspect's Amazon Echo smart speaker, saying authorities haven't established that their investigation is more important than a customer's privacy rights.

The issue comes in the investigation into the death of Victor Collins, who was found floating face-up in a hot tub in a friend's Bentonville home in November 2015. The friend, James Andrew Bates, has pleaded not guilty to first-degree murder.

Benton County prosecutors asked a court to force Amazon to provide data that Bates' Echo may have collected. Echo devices "listen" for a user's voice and respond to commands.

In a response filed Friday, Amazon said prosecutors hadn't established the need for Amazon to violate its customers' constitutional rights. Amazon said prosecutors must prove the information isn't available elsewhere.

Amazon also wants the court to review the recordings before turning them over to prosecutors to ensure they're actually relevant to the case.

"Given the important First Amendment and privacy implications at stake, the warrant should be quashed unless the Court finds that the State has met its heightened burden for compelled production of such materials," Amazon said in the court documents.

The company had previously spoken about prosecutor's request for the information in more general terms, but this is Amazon's first formal legal response to the subpoena for audio recordings and transcripts from the night of Collins' death.

"Amazon will not release customer information without a valid and binding legal demand properly served on us. Amazon objects to overbroad or otherwise inappropriate demands as a matter of course," the company said in a statement.

The Associated Press left a phone message Wednesday seeking

comment from prosecutors in the case.

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