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PSA: With Camera Permission, iPhone Apps Can Take Pictures And Videos Without



Amazon Wants the Keys to Your House



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FBI Director Tells Companies Not to 'Hack Back' Against Hackers

Last week, a congressman proposed a bill that would allow companies to legally counterattack against hackers. But it's not just the law that companies should take note of, Comey suggests.

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Joseph Cox
Mar 8 2017, 7:31pm



Last week, a [Republican congressman proposed](#) a "cyber self defense" bill, which would allow companies to counterattack against hackers. The Active Cyber Defense Certainty Act (ACDC) would make changes to the infamous Computer Fraud and Abuse Act (CFAA), giving room to private actors to collect information about hackers in an attempt to identify them—in other words, hacking back.

But FBI Director James Comey is against this general idea, and not just out of legal concern. In a speech and Q&A session at the Boston Conference on Cyber Security on Wednesday, Comey said this sort of hacking back could disrupt the FBI's own work when trying to apprehend criminal hackers.

"It runs a risk of tremendous confusion in a crowded space," Comey said in response to a question at the end of his talk.

"And I know that's a frustrating answer often, and it maybe some day our country will change the law, but the hacking back could cause all kinds of complications for things we're trying to do to protect you," he added.

Victims may have all sorts of motivations to hack back—maybe they want to uncover the attacker's identity, find out what country they are based in, or perhaps even remotely hack into the attacker's own servers to wipe any stolen data.

data breach, [Bloomberg reported](#) that the FBI looked into whether hackers working on behalf of US financial institutions disabled servers used by Iran to attack the websites of major banks.

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This week, Motherboard contacted a slew of high profile Silicon Valley companies and banks—some organizations which could benefit from hack-back legislation in some way—and asked if they would welcome the proposed bill. The vast majority did not reply, but Twitter said it did not have a statement, and Wells Fargo also declined to comment.

JPMorgan Chase & Co. was one of the companies that did not respond to Motherboard. But the company advocated for hacking back in a closed meeting in 2013, [according to Bloomberg](#).

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The ACDC would allow a cyberattack victim to access "without authorization the computer of the attacker to the victim' [sic] own network to gather information in order to establish attribution of criminal activity to share with law enforcement or to disrupt continued unauthorized activity against the victim's own network," [according to a copy](#) of the proposed bill. It would not allow hacking that destroys data stored on another computer, however, or causes any physical injury.

"Before you consider it, you should talk to us and see what we might be able to do to help," Comey continued.

"Don't do it. It's a crime. Don't do it."

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HACKING

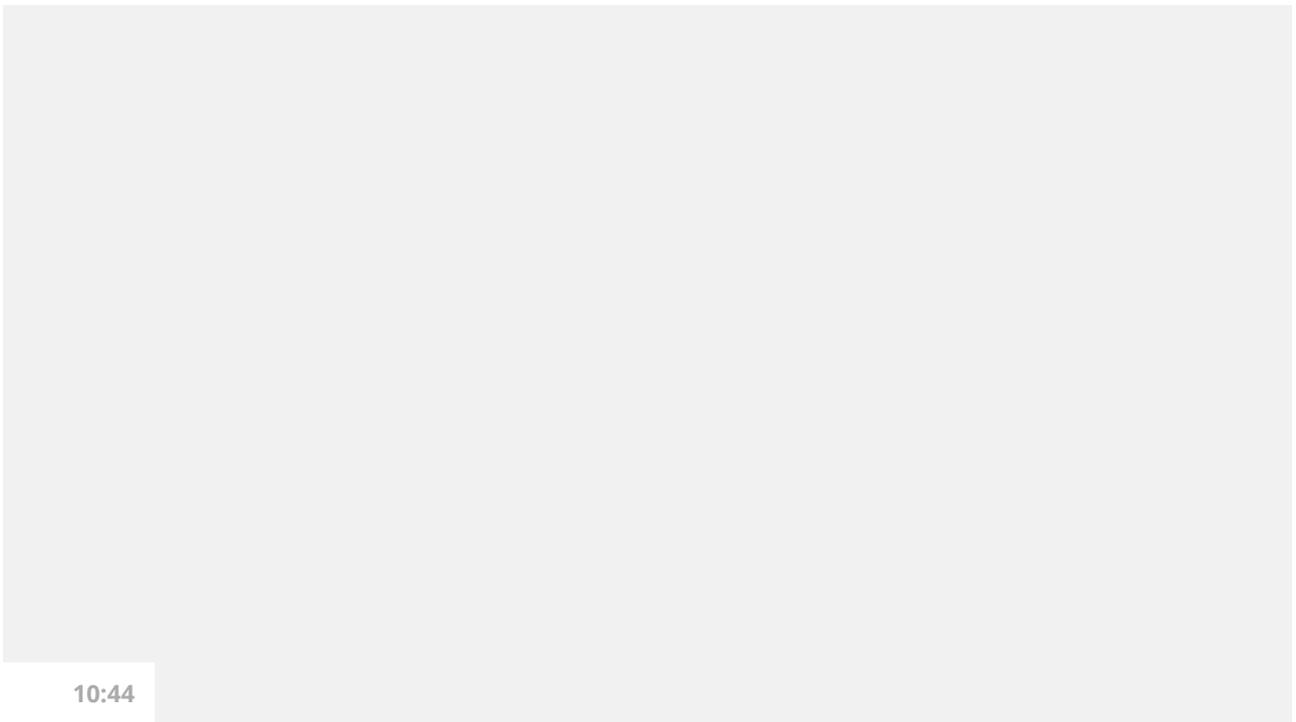
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PSA: With Camera Permission, iPhone Apps Can Take Pictures And Videos Without You Noticing

This is not a bug, but keep it in mind when a random app asks you for permission to access your camera.

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**Lorenzo Franceschi-Bicchierai**

Oct 25 2017, 5:30pm

Image: Shutterstock. Composite: Jason Koebler/Motherboard

Whenever you give iPhone apps permission to access your camera, the app can surreptitiously take pictures and videos of you as long as the app is in the foreground, a security researcher warned on Wednesday.

Felix Krause, who recently [warned of the danger of malicious iPhone password popups](#), wrote [a blog post as a sort of PSA](#) for iPhone users. To be clear, this is not a bug, but likely intended behavior.

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What this means is that even if you don't see the camera "open" in the form of an on-screen viewfinder, an app can still take photos and videos. It is unknown how many apps currently do this, but Krause created a test app as a proof-of-concept.

and hardcore users, it's worth remembering that all apps that have camera permission can technically take photos in this way.

"It's something most people have no idea about, as they think the camera is only being used if they see the camera content or a LED is blinking," Krause told Motherboard in a chat over Twitter direct message. Krause currently works at Google, but performed and published this research independently of his work there.

Read more: [Turning Off Wi-Fi and Bluetooth in iOS 11's Control Center Doesn't Actually Turn Off Wi-Fi or Bluetooth](#)

What's worse is that, unlike on Mac computers—which show a solid green light when the camera is active—the iPhone has no mechanism to indicate to a user that the camera is on.

"You can get full access to both cameras without indicating that to the user," Krause told me.

To test this functionality, Krause [created a custom app called "watch.user"](#) and shared it with me. I installed it on my iPhone and verified that, indeed, the app took pictures of me while I was simply scrolling through it, and it was even running a hidden facial recognition engine.

Krause's app does not upload photos anywhere, nor it stores them in your Photos app, but there's nothing stopping an app from taking pictures and uploading them somewhere without you noticing.

Again, this is not a bug or something you should be too worried about. But it's good to be aware of how much power you're giving apps when you grant them access to your iPhone's cameras.

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Apple did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Got a tip? You can contact this reporter securely on Signal at +1 917 257 1382, OTR chat at lorenzo@jabber.ccc.de, or email lorenzo@motherboard.tv

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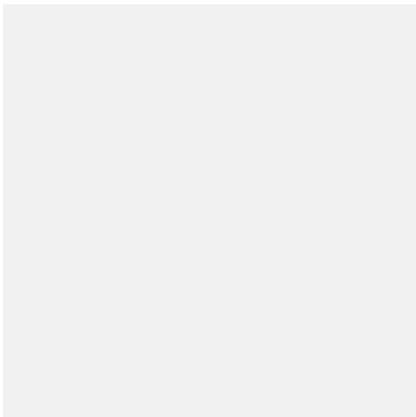
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FELIX KRAUSE

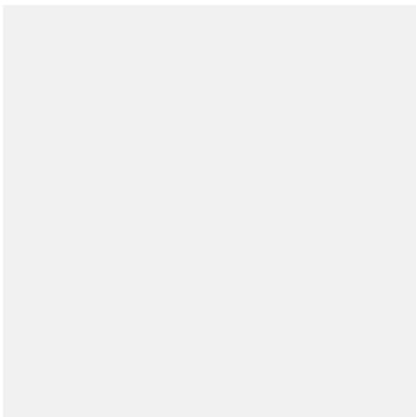
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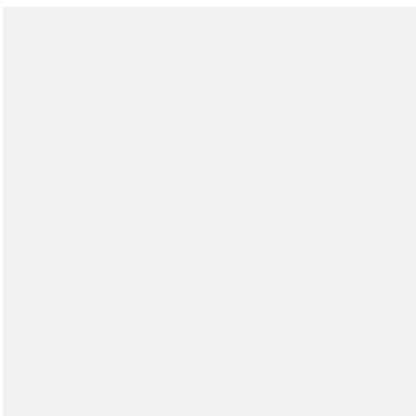
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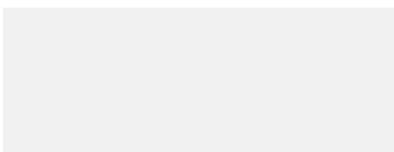
Amazon Wants the Keys to Your House



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Amazon Wants the Keys to Your House

The company announced Amazon Key Wednesday, which lets its couriers enter your home.

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Louise Matsakis

Image: Shutterstock/Amazon / Composition: Louise Matsakis

Amazon has grown into a demanding corporation over the last year. It wants your local government to **subsidize** it with tax credits. It wants to put a **camera** inside your bedroom. It wanted (and **acquired**) Whole Foods' more than **450 stores**. Now, it wants the keys to your house.

Amazon Key is a new service unveiled Wednesday that allows **Amazon couriers** to open your door and leave packages inside, ostensibly so they don't get stolen from your front porch. The move is Amazon's latest attempt to fully optimize its **Prime** subscription service, which offers free two-day shipping in the United States as well as other perks. I imagine one day an Amazon delivery robot will drop off your Prime package or Whole Foods order directly to your bed, no need to get up.

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Amazon Key relies on Amazon's new Cloud Cam and a compatible smart lock. It's **not** the first company to develop a smart lock that can be unlocked remotely. When a courier arrives at a house with a package, they scan its barcode, which sends a request to Amazon. If the package is approved, the Cloud Cam begins recording, and your door unlocks. The package is dropped off, the courier leaves, and the door is relocked behind them. The customer then gets a notification that they received a delivery, along with a video of the courier dropping it off. What could go wrong?

At this point we still don't have details about Amazon Key's security features, but smart locks have been hacked before. Last year, **two security researchers** demonstrated how easy it is to hack into the devices. At the annual DEF CON hacking conference, they tested 16 different Bluetooth-enabled locks, and found that 75 percent were vulnerable.

Amazon Key as well as the Cloud Cam are the latest in a series of home devices developed by Amazon in recent years. The corporation is competing with the likes of Google and Apple to optimize your entire life. The two new devices unveiled today join Amazon's growing list of offerings, including a line of Alexa-enabled **Echo smart speakers**, and a smart camera device called the **Echo Look**. The Cloud Cam will be able to integrate with other Amazon smart devices, according to the company.

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cleaning through [Amazon Home & Business Services](#). Amazon wants to be part of every single aspect of your life. By setting up a camera at your front door, it's setting itself up nicely to do just that.

If Amazon records who and when you invite into your home, it's inherently learning more about our intimate lives and habits than ever before. It can then leverage that data to optimize our existences even further.

Amazon Key and the Cloud Cam will be sold as a bundle for \$249.99, which includes installation. For now, it will only be available in 37 American cities, in places where Amazon Logistics handles deliveries (it's not allowing UPS other logistics companies to use the system for now). You can preorder the camera starting Wednesday, and the key system starting November 8. That is, if you trust Amazon to enter your home.



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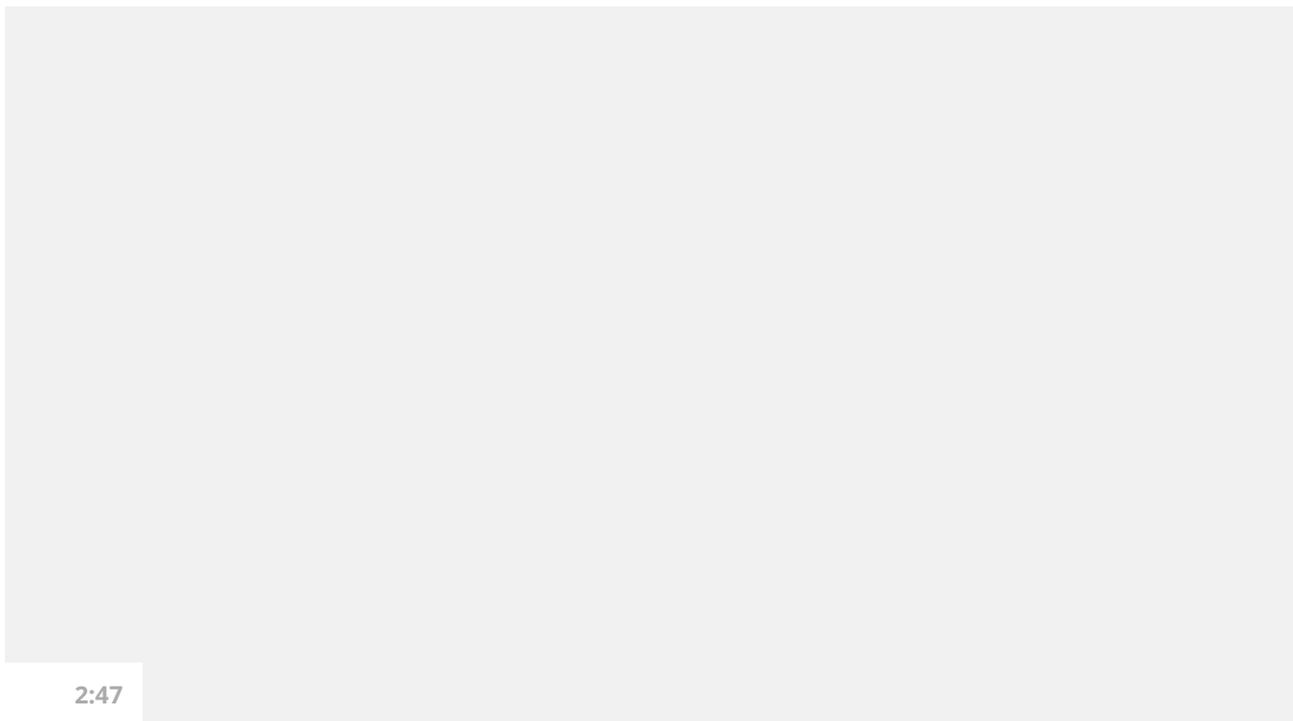
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2:47

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