

# Feds Demand Apple And Google Hand Over Names Of 10,000+ Users Of A Gun-Scope App

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The US government wants Apple and Google to hand over names, phone numbers, and other identifying data of everyone who downloaded an app for a gun-scope app called Obsidian 4. It is a tool that uses video to calibrate gun scopes from an Android or iPhone. The data would deliver the identities of more than 10,000 people so they could be rounded up and forced to surrender their guns. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) says it is seeking the data to aid in an investigation into possible breaches of weapons export regulations, but no one believes that who is aware of the government's long-standing drive to disarm the American people. -GEG

Own a rifle? Got a scope to go with it? The U.S. government might soon know who you are, where you live and how to reach you.

That's because the government wants Apple and Google to hand over names, phone numbers and other identifying data of at least 10,000 users of a single gun scope app, *Forbes* has discovered. It's an unprecedented move: Never before has a case been disclosed in which American investigators demanded personal data of users of a single app from Apple and Google. And never has an order been made public where the feds have asked the Silicon Valley giants for info on so many thousands of people in one go.

According to an application for a court order filed by the Department of Justice (DOJ) on September 5, investigators want information on users of Obsidian 4, a tool used to control rifle scopes made by night-vision specialist American Technologies Network Corp. The app allows gun owners to get a live stream, take video and calibrate their gun scope from an Android or iPhone device. According to the Google Play page for Obsidian 4, it has more than 10,000 downloads. Apple doesn't provide download numbers, so it's unclear how many iPhone owners could be swept up in this latest government data grab.

If the court approves the demand, and Apple and Google decide to hand over the information, it could include data on thousands of people who have nothing to do with the crimes being investigated, privacy activists warned. Edin Omanovic, lead on Privacy International's State Surveillance program, said it would set a dangerous precedent and scoop up "huge amounts of innocent people's personal data."

"Such orders need to be based on suspicion and be particularized—this is neither," Omanovic added.

Neither Apple nor Google had responded to a request for comment at the time of publication. ATN, the scope maker, also hadn't responded.

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Why the data grab?

The Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) department is seeking information as part of a broad investigation into possible breaches of weapons export regulations. It's looking into illegal exports of ATN's scope, though the company itself isn't under investigation, according to the order. As part of that, investigators are looking for a quick way to find out where the app is in use, as that will likely indicate where the hardware has been shipped. ICE has repeatedly intercepted illegal shipments of the scope, which is controlled under the International Traffic in Arms Regulation (ITAR), according to the government court filing. They included shipments to Canada, the Netherlands and Hong Kong where the necessary licenses hadn't been obtained.

"This pattern of unlawful, attempted exports of this rifle scope in combination with the manner in which the ATN Obsidian 4 application is paired with this scope manufactured by Company A supports the conclusion that the information requested herein will assist the government in identifying networks engaged in the unlawful export of this rifle scope through identifying end users located in countries to which export of this item is restricted," the government order reads. (The order was supposed to have been sealed, but *Forbes* obtained it before the document was hidden from public view.) There's no clear stipulation on the government's side to limit this to countries outside of America, though that limitation could be put in place.

It's unclear just whom ICE is investigating. No public charges have been filed related to the company or resellers of its weapons tools. Reports online have **claimed** ATN scopes were being used by the Taliban.

If the court signs off on the order, Apple and Google will be told to hand over not just the names of anyone who downloaded the scope app from August 1, 2017 to the current date, but their telephone numbers and IP addresses too, which could be used to determine the location of the user. The government also wants to know when users were operating the app.

Innocents ensnared

The request is undeniably broad and would likely include all users of the app within America, not just users abroad who might indicate illegal shipments of the gun appendage. Tor Ekeland, a privacy-focused lawyer, said it amounted to a “fishing expedition.” (The DOJ hadn’t responded to a request for comment at the time of publication.)

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