

Should You Tape Over Your Webcam?



photo credit: What sorts of anti-spying measures are really necessary? Leonid Eremeychuk/Shutterstock

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Hackers working for the forces of both good and evil have developed a pretty terrifying ability to sneak into our computers, phones, tablets and other devices. However, while cyber-geniuses may have the electronic weaponry needed to send firewalls crashing down, there's one very rudimentary anti-spyware appliance that they still can't overcome: a piece of tape.

This was highlighted recently by the surprising admission by FBI Director James Comey that he [tapes over the webcam](#) of his personal laptop in order to stop hackers from peeking at him when he's at home. His comments have sparked a debate over whether or not this type of secrecy is necessary or indeed appropriate.

Hysteria over Big Brother's fondness for eavesdropping on the general public has been at an all-time high ever since Edward Snowden [blew the whistle](#) on the National Security Agency's activities in 2013. Given the FBI's reported ability to hack into people's computers and [access](#)

[their webcams](#), the prospect of your device being hijacked and used as an eye into your private life is clearly not entirely without foundation.

However, for regular citizens to think that governments have an interest in watching them while they're getting dressed or just wondering around the house may be a little self-flattering. More significantly, the notion of hack-proofing one's computer in this way raises a number of questions about how we should be engaging with national security efforts.

Comey, for instance, has previously been [quoted](#) as saying that "absolute privacy" hinders law enforcement, implying that people should accept some degree of surveillance in order to enable the authorities to protect them. However, during a speech about encryption and privacy at Kenyon College last week, he admitted to taking measures to sabotage the government's attempts to access his webcam by physically covering it.

The timing of Comey's comments is particularly significant, coming shortly after he called for technology firms not to manufacture unhackable devices. This request was made in response to the recent [legal row](#) between the Department of Justice and Apple, during which the FBI demanded to be given access to the iPhone belonging to the perpetrators of the San Bernardino shootings last December.

Accessing the information – which has now been achieved – could provide key intelligence regarding terrorist networks, although Comey has now come in for heavy criticism by Twitter users accusing him of hypocrisy and double standards.

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