



Written by [James Donlon](#) on December 29, 2017

App Developed by Snowden Detects and Reports Spying

A new app called Haven turns Android phones into spy-detection devices. Haven, developed by The Guardian Project and Freedom of the Press Foundation with help from NSA whistleblower Edward Snowden, is meant to be used on a “burner” phone (a phone intended for short-term use before disposal) that is placed with or near something that one would like to protect from prying eyes or hands. This could be a laptop, notebook, another mobile device, or simply a room or private location. While the usefulness may not be immediately apparent to those in the United States, there is a pressing need in other less-free countries, where free speech, for example, is either not respected or simply does not exist. People — such as journalists — who face spying or even physical danger can use Haven for protection. And given the trend of the surveillance state in America, Haven fills a real need here, as well. Now, almost any Android phone can be a spy-detection device, which will make prying eyes think twice before trying to steal someone else’s secrets.



How does Haven work? The app utilizes a device’s camera, motion and light sensors, microphone, and Internet connection to detect and record any tampering. If detection occurs, Haven will send alerts to your main mobile device via SMS. You can even monitor activity, remotely, via a Tor Onion Service. Haven utilizes serious security and encryption methods, such as Signal, an end-to-end encrypted SMS application, to ensure maximum privacy and security.

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In a recent [press release](#), Freedom of the Press Foundation gives a possible use for Haven: “Imagine you are a journalist working in a hostile foreign country and you are worried about security services breaking into your hotel room and rifling through your belongings and computer while you are away.” This is a game changer for privacy and personal security, especially for those who are watched by totalitarian governments or malicious organizations.

While some might have trepidation at using an app created with help from a man who leaked government secrets (pretty ironic), they need not worry: Haven’s software is completely open-source. This means that the source code can be inspected, and anyone is free to change and recompile the code as they please. As with many popular open-source applications, other program developers will probably



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adopt the software and add or subtract features to fit the market. Although the app is newly released and is still in beta stages (as of December 29), there is a very serious market for such security applications and reports are that Haven is stable and performs well. This is good news for security and privacy enthusiasts.

While technology, particularly that found in mobile devices and operating systems, has made huge advances in the past few years, security and good security practices have not advanced at the same rate. It seems that people can get so caught up in the latest tech that many do not care about privacy and device security. More recently, however, security and privacy have been making big strides. Haven is a part of this picture. While just released, it will be very interesting to see what the future holds for apps such as Haven, and how it will be used to report — and hopefully prevent — spying.



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