



Trump's Apple Boycott Misses the Mark

Donald Trump has waded into the battle between the Justice Department and Apple over smartphone encryption. The controversial presidential candidate has called for a boycott of “all Apple products until such time as Apple gives cellphone info to authorities.”

The issue Trump was addressing stems from investigators' inability to access the data on an iPhone recovered from San Bernardino shooter Syed Rizwan Farook, who was killed in a shootout with police after the massacre in December 2015. The phone — an iPhone 5C — runs a version of iOS which is encrypted by default. As *The New American* [reported](#) Thursday, the FBI asked Apple to help get the data off the phone and Apple responded by doing “everything that is both within our power and within the law to help them,” according to an [open letter to customers](#) posted on the company's website.



The FBI demanded that Apple create a way to hack the encrypted phone and Apple refused, saying, “the U.S. government has asked us for something we simply do not have, and something we consider too dangerous to create. They have asked us to build a backdoor to the iPhone.” At the insistence of the Justice Department, Magistrate Judge Sheri Pym of the Federal District Court for the District of Central California issued a court order to force Apple to create the backdoor. Apple has refused and vowed to fight all the way to the Supreme Court, if necessary.

Trump, well known for making audacious statements, first addressed Apple's decision Wednesday on *Fox & Friends* by asking, “Who do they think they are?” He went on to say, “I think security, overall, we have to open it up and we have to use our heads. We have to use common sense.” Then, in a campaign stop in South Carolina on Thursday, Trump added fuel to the fire by calling for a complete boycott of all Apple products. While speaking about his plan to “take jobs back from China, from Vietnam, from Mexico, from all these countries that are just stripping us,” the GOP candidate abruptly interrupted his own rambling thoughts to say:

I want Apple — first of all Apple ought to give the security for that phone, OK? — What I think you ought to do is boycott Apple until such time as they give that security number. How do you like that? I just thought it. Boycott Apple! Here's the thing. First of all, the phone's not even owned by this young thug that killed all these people. The phone's owned by the government. OK? Not even his phone, we don't have to go that far. But [Apple CEO] Tim Cook is looking to do a big number — probably to show how liberal he is — but Apple should give up — they should get the security or find other people — when these two young people had bombs all over their apartment on the floor,



Written by [C. Mitchell Shaw](#) on February 21, 2016

other people saw those bombs. Well those people — in a certain way — are almost as guilty as the people who did the shooting. We got to get to the bottom of it, and you're not going to get to the bottom of it unless we use common sense. So I like the idea: boycott Apple until such time as they give that information. I think that's a great idea.

While he was speaking, a campaign staffer tweeted from Trump's official Twitter account:

Boycott all Apple products until such time as Apple gives cellphone info to authorities regarding radical Islamic terrorist couple from Cal

According to a [website](#) that specializes in news about Apple and its products, while Trump was on stage calling for the boycott, "a series of unrelated messages" on his twitter account were marked as being sent "via Twitter for iPhone." *That's awkward.*

Trump later tweeted that he uses both iPhone and Samsung (which manufactures a line of smartphones running the Android operating system), but will stop using his iPhone until Apple relents. The tweet said, "I use both iPhone & Samsung. If Apple doesn't give info to authorities on the terrorists I'll only be using Samsung until they give info." In a case of one hand not having a foggy clue what the other hand is doing, Trump's spokeswoman, Hope Hicks, released a statement saying Trump does not use an iPhone.

Trump's "boycott" is as impracticable as it is ridiculous. Does he mean that people should stop buying Apple products? That they stop using the Apple products they already own as he says he plans to do? Stop calling or texting friends who use iPhones? It does not appear that the idea that he "just thought" of while speaking was very well thought out. Furthermore, since he plans to use only his Android powered Samsung until Apple "gives info to authorities," he should be aware that Google — the company behind Android — has publicly agreed with Apple's stand on encrypted devices in general and this case in particular.

Trump may wind up without a phone before this is all over.

This is not the first time Trump has waded in over his head on matters of technology. In December, he suggested that one way to combat ISIS would be to shut them out of the Internet. At a campaign rally in Mesa, Arizona, he said, "I don't want them using our Internet and taking our young impressionable youth," he said. "These are not masterminds. We should be using our brilliant minds to figure out ways ISIS cannot use the Internet and then we should be able to penetrate the Internet and find out exactly where ISIS is." Trump seems to think of the Internet as a highway system where he could simply put up a roadblock and a detour sign and —*voilà'* — ISIS would find their Internet was just gone.

This is also not Trump's first time calling for a boycott. In November 2015, he advocated a boycott of Starbucks because the coffee retailer did not have Christmas decorations on its red holiday cups. He also called for a boycott of Macy's after the store stopped selling his line of clothing. He himself boycotted a Fox News GOP debate in January because Megyn Kelly was named as a moderator. So far, none of his boycotts has had any impact.

The Apple boycott does not seem to be taking off, either. *The Inquistr* reports, "So far, no images or stories of protesters supporting the Apple boycott have emerged yet." To the contrary, Apple appears to be enjoying a reputation for standing for privacy in the face of the surveillance state. Reuters reported that Apple responded to Trump's call for a boycott by saying it puts the "company in standing with other good people [Trump] has criticized."



Photo of Donald Trump: AP Images



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