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Repressive Regimes Use US-Made Technologies for Surveillance, Censorship

By John Glaser

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US contractors supply some of the world's most repressive regimes with surveillance and censorship technology, according to researchers at a Canadian human rights monitoring group.

The Citizen Lab Internet research group, based at the Munk School of Global Affairs at the University of Toronto, found that many autocratic governments around the world use high-tech surveillance and censorship systems made by Blue Coat Systems, based in California.

Their research, according to the *New York Times*, “determined that Egypt, Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates employed a Blue Coat system that could be used for digital censorship.”

Additionally, they discovered that “Bahrain, China, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Kenya, Kuwait, Lebanon, Malaysia, Nigeria, Qatar, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Korea, Singapore, Thailand, Turkey and Venezuela used equipment that could be used for surveillance and tracking.”

“Our findings support the need for national and international scrutiny of the country Blue Coat implementations we have identified, and a closer look at the global proliferation of dual-use information and communications technology,” Citizen Lab noted in a statement.

“We hope Blue Coat will take this as an opportunity to explain their due diligence process to ensure that their devices are not used in ways that violate human rights,” they added.

In December 2011, WikiLeaks released “a database of hundreds of documents from as many as 160 intelligence contractors in the mass surveillance industry,” revealing the pernicious industry behind the effort of repressive states to control digital information.

“In the last ten years, systems for indiscriminate, mass surveillance have become the norm,” WikiLeaks said in a statement.