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European and British law enforcement agencies have arrested hundreds of criminals after they gained access to an encrypted messaging application. The app, EncroChat, has been used by criminal networks to organize drug deals, money laundering operations, extortions, and murders. This app is available pre-installed on custom Android devices that have had their GPS, camera, and microphones removed. The software also includes many features for secrecy such as remote wipe capabilities and self-destructing messages. These devices require a hefty subscription, charging around £1,500 for six months. French and Dutch police were able to gain access to the network and observe communications in real-time. The agencies have arrested 746 suspects, two of which were law enforcement officers, resulting in seizing £54 million in cash, 77 firearms ranging from handguns to an AK47, and more than two tons of drugs. Authorities were also able to prevent rival gangs from carrying out executions and kidnappings in Britain. The agencies claim the encryption was broken early this year in March and wasn't noticed until June 13<sup>th</sup>.

Why we care: While this was a hugely successful operation, it serves as a reminder eventually the encryption methods we rely on may become broken. As their methods haven't been revealed, there could be a similar method that has already been compromised and someone could always be listening.

<https://thehackernews.com/2020/07/encrochat-encrypted-phone.html>