

# The FBI Spent \$775K on Hacking Team's Spy Tools Since 2011

Joseph Cox : 3-4 minutes : 7/6/2015

In 2012, however, the FBI allegedly spent 310,000 Euros for Hacking Team's services, all on licenses or upgrades, and the year before it spent 268,000 Euros.

Despite this expenditure on controversial surveillance technology, it appears that the FBI is only using Hacking Team's software as a "back up" to other tools, according to internal emails.

As [highlighted by Forbes](#), Eric Rabe, Hacking Team's communications chief, wrote in a leaked email that "The FBI unit that is using our system seems like a pretty small operation and they have purchased RCS as a sort of back up to some other system they user."

A final column on one of the hacked spreadsheets is entitled "Exploit". For the FBI, the entry is written as "Yes." Though it's unclear exactly what this means, we can infer that the FBI's version of RCS came with an exploit of some kind that could gain access to user's computers, rather than being deployed through social-engineering means.

Regardless, the FBI has been known to hack the computers of criminals in the past. In fact, the agency [has been using malware](#) since at least 2002 for all sorts of criminal cases, and the FBI [develops some of its own tools](#). In 2012, "Operation Torpedo" was launched, which involved loading malware onto a number of child pornography sites, and identifying the IP addresses of anyone who visited. A similar operation was launched shortly after, in order to catch [users of Freedom Hosting](#), a dark web hosting company.

Those were both broad attacks, designed to sweep up as many offenders as possible. Hacking Team's tools, on the other hand, are used for more targeted surveillance of specific individuals or groups. According to the hacked spreadsheets, the FBI has used RCS against 35 targets, although it is unclear who these targets are.

The FBI did not immediately respond to multiple requests for comment.

One interesting tidbit from the spreadsheet is that it appears that Hacking Team has not been selling these products directly to the FBI. Though the FBI is listed as the client, its "Partner/Fulfillment Vehicle" is listed as "CICOM USA."

That name is familiar. Earlier this year, [an investigation from Motherboard](#) revealed that the Drug Enforcement Administration had been secretly purchasing surveillance technology from Hacking Team. Within that contract, \$2.4 million was sent “between the DEA's Office of Investigative Technology and a government contractor named Cicom USA,” according to Motherboard.

An invoice with the file name “Commessa019.2014. CICOM USA x FBI.xls,” also included in the Hacking Team archive, lists a “One year renewal for Remote Control System,” charged to Cicom USA. The invoice says that the product lasts from July 1, 2014 to the June 30, 2015. The file name for the invoice explicitly includes the FBI, and not the DEA. However, the spreadsheet with the client list shows that the FBI is, in fact, joined by the DEA and the DOD in buying products from Hacking Team, which both also use Cicom USA as their “fulfillment vehicles.”