

Your mobile phone is a wiretap... even if turned off!

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A mobile phone turned off and put on the table during a meeting can be activated remotely to hear what is being said. According to Alain Hurst, from the Defence applications division of the CEA (Atomic Energy Authority), a method has been found to make these hidden listeners deaf.

"Almost all mobile phones have a secret listening function that can be activated by a computer code, which a phone operator can send without the owner of the phone realising it," explains Alain Hurst, a director of computer security for the CEA's department of military applications.

Most modern phones "can be activated remotely", so that "they can be listened to" on request from an investigating judge, a function that can also be used by "those with bad intentions". The expert explains that thus "there is a risk of a mobile being used as a mini-spy, more or less anywhere." Even when it is switched off, a mobile "continues to operate", and the connection is not interrupted. In order to turn it off completely during a confidential meeting, you have to take out the battery.

To ensure confidentiality in meetings, in the military and to protect industrial secrets, the latest advice is to remove the phone battery or else leave the phone outside the room.

There is another solution. "Since it is not easy to cut off the microphone and the phone signal, the idea is to prevent the sound waves reaching the phone, by shutting it in a box that muffles them." It's also possible to scramble the sound or to replace it with another, for instance with music. The CEA has already lodged a patent to protect its idea, which was inspired by anti-noise headphones. (Source AFP)