

Politics

Are local police conducting NSA-style surveillance?

By William Patrick

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TALLAHASSEE, Fla. – The National Security Agency apparently isn't the only government agency engaged in domestic spying.

Local law enforcement is playing the role of Big Brother, too, but to what extent is still unknown. ADVERTISEMENT

Recent court documents reveal a troubling cell phone surveillance program conducted by a Florida police department against unsuspecting cell phone users.

Attempts to keep the practice secret, even from judges, is raising questions as to just how prevalent police spying is within the Sunshine State.

The controversy stems from the arrest of James L. Thomas, a criminal suspect believed to be in possession of a stolen phone. Tallahassee police located and arrested Thomas by tracking a cell phone signal, then promptly searched his home.

It later became known that police didn't seek a warrant or admit to using a little-known surveillance device called a "Stingray."

Stingrays are small mobile devices that trick cell phones into connecting to them as if they were cell phone towers. The technology gives police the ability to track phone movements and intercept both phone calls and text messages of any cell phone within range.