

SpaceX Preparing to Launch Rogue Satellites For Silicon Valley Oligarchs To Spy On Everybody's Email And Web Searches?

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“Perfect timing!” Mike Coletta said when he answered the phone. I called him recently to ask about some satellites currently orbiting Earth. Just then, one of them was passing over his home in Colorado.

Coletta has been tracking satellites with radio antennas^[1] mounted on his house for years. This spring, he’s on a special mission: He wants to catch the transmissions of “SpaceBees,” four satellites that were launched into space without permission.

Last December, the Federal Communications Commission, the U.S. government agency that oversees satellite launches, explicitly told the California-based maker of these satellites that they couldn’t launch them. They did it anyway the following month, marking the first-known unauthorized launch of a commercial satellite in American history.

This sets a dangerous precedent. The satellites’ makers appeared to have good intentions: to bring internet connectivity to people who might benefit from it. Other satellite operators may not—and we may find out too late.

Coletta dug up the SpaceBees’ planned radio frequency in FCC documents. The satellites aren’t supposed to be transmitting. For weeks, he heard nothing. Then last week, he detected^[2] a signal as the satellites passed over him. A few days ago, he detected^[3] it again.