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U.S. Underwrites Internet Detour Around Censors



Keith Berkoben/Fab Folk

Volunteers have built a wireless Internet around Jalalabad, Afghanistan, from off-the-shelf electronics and ordinary materials. [More Photos](#)

By JAMES GLANZ and JOHN MARKOFF
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The Obama administration is leading a global effort to deploy “shadow” Internet and mobile phone systems that dissidents can use to undermine repressive governments that seek to silence them by censoring or shutting down telecommunications networks.

The effort includes secretive projects to create independent cellphone networks inside foreign countries, as well as one operation out of a spy novel in a fifth-floor shop on L Street in Washington, where a group of young entrepreneurs who look as if they could be in a garage band are fitting deceptively innocent-looking hardware into a prototype “Internet in a suitcase.”

Financed with a \$2 million State Department grant, the suitcase could be secreted across a border and quickly set up to allow wireless communication over a wide area with a link to the global Internet.

The American effort, revealed in dozens of interviews, planning documents and classified diplomatic cables obtained by The New York Times, ranges in scale, cost and sophistication.

Some projects involve technology that the United States is developing; others pull together tools that have already

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Technology for ‘Shadow’ Internet Networks



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