Twitter Thread by Cory Doctorow #BLM

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@doctorow

Surveillance companies assure us that they employ safeguards to ensure that their customers aren't abusing their products to engage in unlawful or unethical surveillance. And yet, inevitably, these companies abuse their tools THEMSELVES.

1/



It's almost as though being the kind of person who dreams of achieving incredible wealthy by spying on people makes you kind of an asshole.

2/

Like the people at @VerkadaHQ, "a fast-growing Silicon Valley surveillance startup" whose male employees used its own products to sexually harass their female colleagues and received the barest wrist-slaps for it.

https://t.co/rsAEcXzhHu

3/

Male Verkada employees maintained a private Slack channel where executives posted photos of female employees - captured with the company's own surveillance tools - and made sexually explicit remarks about them.

4/

When this came to light, the company's founder and CEO Filip Kaliszan called an all-hands meeting, expressed disappointment in the harassers, and told them that they could either quit...or lose some stock options. They chose the latter and remain employed there to this day.

5/

The company is valued at $1.6b and employees 400 people, selling "machine vision security cameras with cloud-software, including dome cameras, fisheye lenses, and footage viewing stations."

6/

The only guarantee we have that this ballooning surveillance arm-dealer isn't supplying dictators and gangsters is its forbearance - the ethical sensibilities of its senior execs.

(Oh well).

7/

Verkada isn't alone in being a creepy company run by creeps. Recall Facemash, Mark Zuckerberg's prototype for Facebook, was created to nonconsensually rate the suitability of his female Harvard classmates for sexual congress.

https://t.co/IBs1kcw6hP

8/

And remember LOVEINT, the NSA's cutesy codeword for the illegal use of its mass-surveillance tools by male spies to stalk women using the awesome power of the US intelligence apparatus.

https://t.co/B5hnK1ZYil

9/

I met my wife at a Nokia conference in Helsinki over midsummer in 2003. The organizers quartered us all at the Hotel Torni, a building notorious for having served as KGB headquarters during the "Agreement of Friendship, Cooperation, and Mutual

Assistance" with the USSR.

10/

The Torni had a plaque on the ground floor commemorating the building's history, noting that when the 12-story building was renovated after the KGB left, they found 20km of wiretapping wires in the walls.

11/

Because while each KGB agent was nominally charged with surveilling the Finns and other potential threats to Soviet hegemony, their primary targets were each other.

There is no honor among creeps.

Cryteria (modified)
https://t.co/ICebVcdH1f

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