

JAMES SMITH, TOR AND THE DARK NET: REMAIN ANONYMOUS AND EVADE NSA SPYING  
(Pinnacle Pub., 2016)

2016 Pinnacle Publishers  
ISBN: 9780692674444  
Price: \$8.49  
Page Length: 114 Pages

Keywords: Tor, privacy, dark net, law enforcement, NSA, Internet

Reviewed by Nicole Siino  
Journal of High Technology Law  
Suffolk University Law School

---

### **Interesting Attempts to Avoid Law Enforcement While Using the Dark Net**

*“Let us face it. We are all human and we make mistakes. Unfortunately, you only need to make one mistake, and the law enforcement...can bust you.”<sup>1</sup>*

James Smith’s *Tor and the Dark Net: Remain Anonymous and Evade NSA Spying*, exemplifies the best ways to protect yourself from law enforcement government searches on the Dark Net. Smith argues that Internet privacy is at stake due to the spread of governmental power, but people can protect themselves by using anonymizing software such as Tor and the Dark Net.<sup>2</sup> The book provides step by step instructions on how to avoid government detection, including the NSA, on the Internet.<sup>3</sup> The purpose of this book review is to analyze the authors methodology and understanding of how law enforcement approaches Internet searches. This review will also take the adverse position on why law enforcement officials need to be able to search anonymizing software.

---

<sup>1</sup> JAMES SMITH, TOR AND THE DARK NET: REMAIN ANONYMOUS AND EVADE NSA SPYING 21 (Pinnacle Pub., 2016).

<sup>2</sup> See Smith, *supra* note 1, at v.

<sup>3</sup> See Smith, *supra* note 1, at iii-iv.

Before becoming a full-time writer, James Smith worked as a software security engineer.<sup>4</sup> He claims to be programmer, security expert, and Internet activist.<sup>5</sup> He wishes to help as many people as possible with his online security knowledge.<sup>6</sup> He has written two other books relating to data and computer security. The titles are *Data Analytics: What Every Business Must Know About Big Data* and *Data Science and Hacking and Pen Testing: Become an Expert in Computer Hacking and Security*.<sup>7</sup>

*Tor and the Dark Net: Remain Anonymous and Evade NSA Spying* focuses on privacy laws and ways to avoid incrimination from law enforcement.<sup>8</sup> Additionally, Smith goes into detail about how and when to retain a lawyer and what countries to flee if Dark Net users get caught engaging in illegal activities.<sup>9</sup> He encourages Dark Net users to retain a lawyer and, if caught by law enforcement, to invoke the Fifth Amendment right to silence.<sup>10</sup> The entire book is a guide on how to avoid government prosecution and loosely explains how law enforcement tackles anonymous Internet searching.

Smith breaks the book into three different parts. The first addresses the technical aspects of remaining anonymous on the Internet by discussing what Tor is and how to access it and other types of anonymizing software.<sup>11</sup> Smith goes into detail about the different types of encryption anonymizing software users can utilize and discusses why some are better than others.<sup>12</sup> The second part provides examples of, alleged, real life scenarios in which Tor and Dark Net users

---

<sup>4</sup> James Smith, AMAZON: AUTHOR PAGE (last visited Feb. 25, 2017) [https://www.amazon.com/James-Smith/e/B01M5GUDX8/ref=dp\\_byline\\_cont\\_book\\_1](https://www.amazon.com/James-Smith/e/B01M5GUDX8/ref=dp_byline_cont_book_1)

<sup>5</sup> See Smith, *supra* note 4.

<sup>6</sup> See Smith, *supra* note 4.

<sup>7</sup> See Smith, *supra* note 4.

<sup>8</sup> See Smith, *supra* note 1, at v.

<sup>9</sup> See Smith, *supra* note 1, at 21, 48.

<sup>10</sup> See Smith, *supra* note 1, at 22.

<sup>11</sup> See Smith, *supra* note 1, at 1.

<sup>12</sup> See Smith, *supra* note 1, at 4-7.

did not take appropriate measures to ensure their privacy through encryptions and were ultimately discovered by law enforcement.<sup>13</sup> One example includes how a Dark Net user posted about his Dark Net uses on Facebook and law enforcement subpoenaed his Facebook account.<sup>14</sup> The third part includes advice on how to remain anonymous on the Internet while freedom fighting.<sup>15</sup> Smith recommends never leaving a computer used from freedom fighting unattended and to check to make sure encryption layers are always connected before searching the Dark Net.<sup>16</sup>

Smith argues that Internet privacy is in the past but that people can protect themselves from the NSA and other government searches by using Tor and the Dark Net.<sup>17</sup> The author's use of examples provides only a small glimpse into Dark Net functions when, in reality, the Dark Net is also used to conduct illegal activities like the selling and trading of drugs and the distribution of child pornography. Smith approaches the subject of Internet privacy with a sense that law enforcement and the government is out to get everyone.<sup>18</sup> He eludes that a conspiracy exists where the government wants to take away people's privacy on the Internet. This argument is completely far-fetched. Law enforcement protects people from harm, they are not out to get people and if they are investigating someone on the Internet, it is for good reason.

Smith cites no law, however he does provide links to news stories from credible sources, such as USA Today and NBC Los Angeles, that describe law enforcement searching the Dark Net for criminals.<sup>19</sup> He encourages readers to look up the new stories to see how law

---

<sup>13</sup> See Smith, *supra* note 1, at 52.

<sup>14</sup> See Smith, *supra* note 1, at 52.

<sup>15</sup> See Smith, *supra* note 1, at 77.

<sup>16</sup> See Smith, *supra* note 1, at 84-85.

<sup>17</sup> See Smith, *supra* note 1, at v.

<sup>18</sup> See Smith, *supra* note 1, at 35.

<sup>19</sup> See Smith, *supra* note 1, at 35, 37.

enforcement attempts “to set you up.”<sup>20</sup> Smith relies on examples that all relate to law enforcement putting an end to illegal activity.<sup>21</sup> Smith’s extreme view that law enforcement is out to get everyone is inaccurate. Law enforcement is only interested in criminals on the Dark Net. While this book was written for people who want to increase their privacy on the Internet, it is written in an unorganized and unconvincing fashion.

*Tor and the Dark Net: Remain Anonymous and Evade NSA Spying* provides an almost unreadable description of how the Dark Net operates and why people utilize it. This book provides no help to people who have never been exposed to data encryption or the Dark Net. The author fails to discuss when the government and law enforcement have reason to search the Dark Net like to stop a wide-spread child pornography distribution. This book may provide a valuable contribution to Dark Net users, but definitely not towards Internet privacy laws. Smith made it very clear that he sought to inform Dark Net users on how to remain anonymous and how to avoid government and law enforcement detection.<sup>22</sup>

The book lacked structure. While the content required a higher level of understanding, it was poorly written and at times read like a grade school student wrote it. It contained sloppy mistakes which were a huge weakness of the book. It could have been presented in a much more organized and neater fashion that would have helped with the persuasiveness of the argument.

This book provides an informative overview of Tor and the Dark Net. Smith informs readers on the highly technical aspects of the Dark Net in an unconvincing way. His lack of uniformity and extreme grammatical errors made me question the validity of his argument. The book lacked flow and read as if it were all short pieces written separately and pasted together as

---

<sup>20</sup> See Smith, *supra* note 1, at 37.

<sup>21</sup> See Smith, *supra* note 1, at 37.

<sup>22</sup> See Smith, *supra* note 1, at v.

one. I would recommend this book to people who want to learn more about Tor and the Dark Net and how to remain anonymous on the Internet, but advise them to take it with a grain of salt. I would not recommend this book to the vast majority of people just because of how poorly it was written and how Smith only focused on one aspect of the Dark Net, freedom fighting. He did not go into detail about all the illegal and horrible things that happen on the Dark Net.