

"Big Bother Isn't Just Watching.....He's Listening Too!"

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A news anchor reports that the Federal Bureau of Investigations can now hear everything you're saying through your cell phone. Faces contort as listeners hear this startling revelation. The reporter continues, "Even when your phone is off, the FBI can activate the microphone and eavesdrop on you." The government's ability to not only track your every move but listen to your conversations is the premises behind the DreamWorks feature release "Eagle Eye". This movie depicts the saga of Jerry Shaw (Shia LeBeouf) and Rachel Holloman (Michelle Monaghan); two complete strangers who have been "activated" or forced to engage in illegal activity by a mysterious female voice on their cell phones.

As the film progresses, we learn that the female voice belongs to a super computer named Aria. Through a series of carefully orchestrated phone calls, Aria coerces Jerry and Rachel to act under penalty of harm to themselves and their families. Her justification is the irrational belief that "The Constitution allows for civilians to be recruited for the national defense." Aria's judgment causes U.S. citizens to be compelled to act against their wills. We see Jerry and Rachel's fear as they protest Aria's commands yet carry out her instructions.

Aria is the focal point of the Department of Defense's Eagle Eye project. The project is aptly named since Aria knows all because she can see all. She has the ability to access surveillance cameras and other electronic devices in order to obtain information. Aria was created to analyze data and provide advice to the military. What viewers see, however, is her manipulation of traffic control devices, cell phones, automated cranes, surveillance cameras, fighter jets and LED ticklers. These acts are done with a misguided notion of protecting national security. Aria's actions are tantamount to Cyberterrorism. Her attacks on automated systems were done in furtherance of her political objective; the overthrow of the government by killing the president and his cabinet. Her threats cause Rachel and Jerry to commit theft, unlawful entry, assault and attempted murder.

Cyberterrorism has gained momentum since the late 1990's and is an ever growing phenomenon. Terrorists use computers to disseminate computer viruses, hack into networks, and distribute threats. In protest against NATO's bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade, three U.S. government web sites were hacked. In that incident hackers posted protest messages and

pictures of journalist killed in the embassy bombing onto the sites. On another occasion, the web site of Ukrainian president Viktor Yushchenko was attacked by a radical Russian nationalist youth group. The Eurasian Youth Movement temporarily disabled the site in retaliation of the attack on its own site and in protest of Yushchenko's campaign to bring Ukraine into the European Union and NATO. These technological forms of terrorism replace murder, kidnapping and destruction of property. Although "Eagle Eye" creates a shrewd, manipulative computer to highlight Cyberterrorism, it draws attention to a matter of growing concern.

Aria's behavior stems from a US Air Force request for assistance in locating and eliminating an Afghani terrorist. Aria recommended against bombing a village where the terrorist was believed to be positioned. She did so because there was only a 51% probability that the terrorist that was sought was indeed the man located. The President disagreed with Aria's advice and ordered the strike. This executive decision led to the destruction of a village of innocent civilians and ignited a firestorm of suicide bombings near the U.S. Embassy in Afghanistan. In response to the bombings, Aria decided that the executive branch had to be eliminated in order to prevent further retaliation. Her logic, "The people have the right to abolish any form of government that becomes destructive to its own end." She therefore used Jerry and Rachel to carry out her plans. Her goal was to eliminate the President and his cabinet in order in order to make way for new leadership. The Secretary of Defense would be spared since he agreed with Aria's recommendation. He would later assume the office of the presidency. As the film concludes, we see Jerry save the day and Aria destroyed.

Aria is a highly exaggerated example of artificial intelligence gone wild. In theory, the creation of a computer that can access any networked device in the world, analyze data and provide military strategy would be an invaluable asset. No doubt, it represents a tremendous instrument for achieving homeland security. However, Aria's detriments far outweigh her benefits. She is an asset when it comes to acquiring data, but a liability when interpreting the Constitution. Her conclusions pertaining to use of civilians to protect the nation and the elimination of the President are clearly illogical and extreme.

There should be no doubt that "Eagle Eye" represents DreamWorks' vision of a modern day Frankenstein monster; one made of a hard drive, CPU and motherboard. Dr. Frankenstein's creation eventually turned on him just as Aria turned on the U.S. government. Although the film is predictable and

unrealistic, "Eagle Eye" presents an age old message...the folly of attempting to create man-made intelligence rather than reliance on the intelligence of man himself. The film is reminiscent of movies like "The Matrix" and "The Terminator". These films also illustrate what happens when machines are given minds of their own; ultimately, they become uncontrollable and need to be destroyed.