

Company's new products attract military customers

BY ED DUGGAN

CELL ANTENNA CORP.

Howard and Barbara Melamed successfully sell antennas, amplifiers and repeaters that make cell phones work better in boats, buildings and vehicles.

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Last year, the company did \$2.5 million in

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Web site-originated sales to individuals, companies and government agencies. This year, sales are expected to double from a widening range of products.

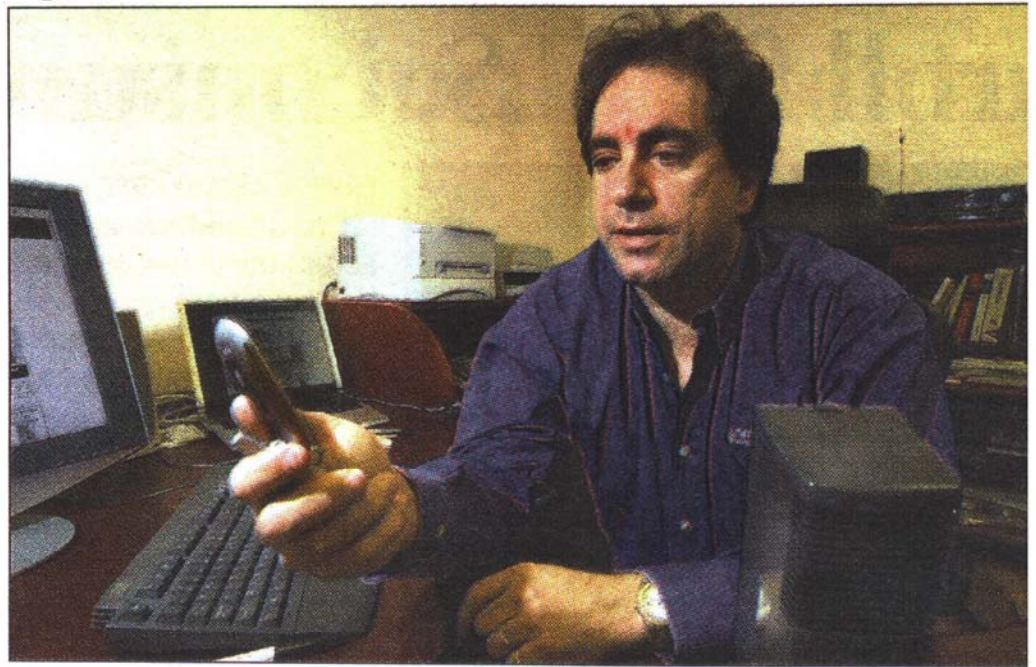
Their latest hardware products, "jammers," or "black boxes," do the opposite of their existing line: they jam or override cell phone signals, effectively shutting them off.

There's just one small problem: It is illegal to import or possess even one of them.

"They are illegal in the United States and Canada, but legal everywhere else," Howard Melamed said. "Here, only the military and government agencies such as the CIA, the FBI, Homeland Security and police departments can purchase and possess them. They are our only jammer customers."

He even has government employees activate the demo unit and flip the switch before each demonstration to operate strictly within the law. The sole demo unit is kept in a bank vault when it is not in use.

What makes them illegal is the interpretation of an old law, said David G. Bates, chairman of the emerging company practice in the West Palm Beach law firm of Gunster Yoakley & Stewart, who has no connection with Cell Antenna.



MARK FRFRK

"The FCC relies on the Federal Communications Act of 1934 in deeming cellular telephone jamming devices illegal," he said. "The Act states, 'no person shall willfully or maliciously interfere with or cause interference to any radio communications licensed or authorized by the United States government.'"

Violators can get large fines or jail time.

Bates sees the possibility of changes.

"Anyone disturbed by a cellular phone conversation in a concert, or by the ringing of a cell phone in a church, would likely welcome a change in the law and the installation of jamming devices in certain locations," he said.

Cell phone blockers are more than a toy or nuisance avoiders. They are major security devices because cell phones are known to be tools of choice for the detonation of terrorists' remote bombs.

"Now that terrorist groups use cellular phones to detonate bombs, the FCC is likely to come under pressure to permit the installation of jamming devices in selected public locations," Bates said.

Cell Antenna offers three jamming models. One, the size of a small suitcase, costs \$15,000 to \$20,000 and, with 35 watts of power, cuts off all cell phones within a six-block radius.

Another, the size of two fists, costs \$500 and cuts off cell phone signals within a room about the size of a typical courtroom.

A third model, pocket size, costs \$250 and kills cell phone signals in a space from 6 feet to 20 feet around the holder.

"So far, it's a very small part of our business," Barbara Melamed said. "Nearly all of our customers want better reception."

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