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Adam M. Gershowitz, a professor at William & Mary Law School, noted that his iPhone tracked and stored his movements. “I just looked,” he said, “and my phone shows that I arrived at work yesterday at 8:56 a.m.” It also showed where and when he had lunch.

The first case to be argued Tuesday, *Riley v. California*, No. 13-132, arose from the arrest of David L. Riley, who was pulled over in 2009 in San Diego for having an expired registration. The police found loaded guns in his car and, on inspecting Mr. Riley’s smartphone, entries they associated with a street gang.

A more comprehensive search of the phone led to information that linked Mr. Riley to a shooting. He was later convicted of attempted murder and sentenced to 15 years to life in prison. A California appeals court said neither search had required a warrant.

In its [Supreme Court brief](#), California said information on phones “is not different in kind from wallets, address books, personal papers and other items that have long been subject to examination.”

Another case on Tuesday, *United States v. Wurie*, No. 13-212, involved a search of the call log of the flip phone of Brima Wurie, who was arrested in 2007 in Boston and charged with gun and drug crimes. The federal appeals court in Boston last year [threw out the evidence](#) found on Mr. Wurie’s phone.

“Today, many Americans store their most personal ‘papers’ and ‘effects’ in electronic format on a cellphone, carried on the person,” Judge Norman H. Stahl

wrote for a divided three-judge panel of the court, quoting the words of the Fourth Amendment.

News organizations, including The New York Times, filed [a brief](#) supporting Mr. Riley and Mr. Wurie in which they argued that cellphone searches can compromise news gathering.

Other briefs in the two cases focused to an unusual degree on the practical questions of whether phone searches must be conducted immediately or can await a warrant.

Officials in California told the justices that searches are required because cellphones can be used to set off bombs. Mr. Riley's lawyers [responded](#) that "this scarcely resonates as an everyday concern."

The state's brief added that immediate searches are needed because data on cellphones can be erased by a remote signal, perhaps by criminal confederates. [A supporting brief](#) from several law enforcement groups described an application "that would wipe a phone's memory based on when the phone is carried into certain locations — such as a police station."

Mr. Riley's lawyers responded that all the police need to do is put the seized phones in airplane mode while they seek a warrant. If that is not enough, they say, the police can use so-called Faraday bags, which block remote signals and are sold for as little as \$6, or wrap the seized phones in a few pennies' worth of aluminum foil.

The parties disputed whether such methods are completely effective. Even if they are, Solicitor General Donald B. Verrilli Jr. [told the justices](#), a Faraday bag works only until it is opened to inspect the phone, at which point the phone again becomes vulnerable to remote wiping.

"That means," Mr. Verrilli wrote, "that local police departments will need not only cheap Faraday bags but also Faraday rooms or other specialized equipment."

Professor Gershowitz, who has written several law review articles on cellphone searches and who filed [a brief](#) supporting Mr. Riley and Mr. Wurie, said a simpler solution would be to use a Faraday bag with a clear window. [One such bag](#) sells for \$95.

In general, he said, the fear of remote wiping is easily addressed, adding that [his latest article](#) may provoke an experiment at the Supreme Court.

“I’m hoping,” he said, “that a law clerk is sitting in a back room wrapping a phone in aluminum foil.”

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