# Why a "Kill Switch" Isn't the Answer

- A "Kill Switch" is a way to permanently disable a mobile phone or device. It is essentially a function within the mobile equipment, so that when a message of some format (such as a special SMS) is sent to it, the mobile will cease to operate, and cannot be reactivated or reused.
- Even if technically feasible to develop, a permanent "kill switch" has very serious risks.
- If created, this capability would be in every handset and the "kill" message would be known to every operator and therefore could not be kept secret.
  - o Anyone replicating this "kill" message - such as forging an SMS or any other message sent to the mobile device - can effectively disable the mobile device forever.
  - o The risk is that by sending multiple messages - such as incrementing the MSISDN (the telephone number) or IMSI (the unique identity of the customer) or the IMEI (the equipment identifier) - groups of mobiles can be permanently disabled.
  - o This could be used to disable entire groups of customers, such as Department of Defense, Homeland Security or emergency services/law enforcement.
  - o This could be used to disable random customers as retaliation by a variety of persons or entities.
- Where mobile devices are permanently disabled by malicious use of a "kill switch," the safety of subscribers may be jeopardized as they will be unable to make emergency calls.
- This risk of Denial of Service (DoS) is far too large and is the reason the operator community has always maintained that control of operation (and denial of service) be done in the network and not in the mobile device.
- If a consumer's device was permanently disabled because it was reported as lost or stolen, that device would be unusable if it was later found by the customer. This could result in a consumer likely having to pay several hundred dollars when a more consumer-friendly, effective solution is already being implemented.

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