

U.S. Justice Department Spying on Millions of U.S. Drivers



Washington, January 31 (RHC)-- The U.S. Justice Department has been spying on hundreds of millions of American drivers, says a new report by the Wall Street Journal. The Justice Department has been gathering a national database in order to track in real time the movement of motorists around the US, according to current and former officials and government documents.

The program, run by the Drug Enforcement Administration, aims to confiscate cars, cash and other assets for fighting drug trafficking, according to one government document. However, the department has expanded its use to hunt for vehicles involved in other potential crimes, including kidnappings, people familiar with the matter said.

The program also allows many state and local law-enforcement agencies to have access to motorists' personal information and they can track vehicles in real time on major roadways. In addition, it was not clear if any court monitors or approves the data gathering by the Justice Department.

The program "raises significant privacy concerns. The fact that this intrusive technology is potentially being used to expand the reach of the government's asset-forfeiture efforts is of even greater concern," said Sen. Patrick Leahy, senior Democrat on the Senate Judiciary Committee. Leahy called for "additional accountability," saying American citizens should not be worried about whether "their locations and movements are constantly being tracked and stored in a massive government database."

The latest revelations are expected to fuel controversy about privacy violations and the scope of government surveillance in the United States. A similar report published recently also showed that the US has secretly equipped at least 50 law enforcement agencies with radars that enable their officers to see through the walls of houses.

The agencies, including the FBI and U.S. Marshals Service, began using the handheld Range-R devices more than two years ago without public disclosure, according to USA Today.

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