

RON WYDEN
OREGON

RANKING MEMBER OF COMMITTEE ON
FINANCE

221 DIRKSEN SENATE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20510
(202) 224-5244

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-3703

COMMITTEES:

COMMITTEE ON FINANCE
COMMITTEE ON THE BUDGET
COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES
SELECT COMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE
JOINT COMMITTEE ON TAXATION

October 8, 2026

The Honorable Sara Carter
Director
Office of National Drug Control Policy
1800 G Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20006

Dear Director Carter:

I write to request that you publicly release a review of privacy issues related to the High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA) program, commissioned by the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) and conducted by MITRE in 2024. ONDCP commissioned this report after I raised concerns about the Hemisphere Project, a now-ended dragnet surveillance program for Americans' phone records. Recent reporting indicates that a HIDTA-funded program is now being used to aggregate data from Flock and other automated license plate reader (ALPR) cameras nationwide. Given the current lack of transparency into HIDTA-funded surveillance programs, and public concern about the privacy and safety risks associated with ALPRs, I urge you to make the MITRE review public, as well as any other assessment into privacy issues or ALPR practices of HIDTA-funded programs.

From 2007 to 2024, the Houston HIDTA administered a secretive bulk surveillance program called the Hemisphere Project. Under this program, AT&T was reportedly paid with HIDTA funds from the White House to mine trillions of domestic phone records, dating as far back as 1987, of not only its own customers but from any telephone carrier that used an AT&T switch. This data was made available for use by law enforcement at all levels across the country. Requesters of information from this database were instructed to never refer to the program in any official document. Its existence was only revealed in 2013, after a local law enforcement agency released an ONDCP slide deck about Hemisphere in response to a public records request.

I long raised concerns with the legality of the Hemisphere Project, based on my review of a redacted Inspector General report from 2019. In November 2023, I sent a letter requesting that the Department of Justice publicly release information contained in this report. Rep. Biggs and I sent a follow-up letter in May 2024. The Department of Justice finally released additional public information in March 2025, revealing that officials at the Drug Enforcement Administration warned about legal issues with Hemisphere soon after it was created and that officials at the Federal Bureau of Investigation were so alarmed that they suspended use of Hemisphere within the agency unless changes were made. The ONDCP also informed my office that federal funding for Hemisphere was ended as of September 30, 2024, and the program has been shut down.

Hemisphere is not the only surveillance program that has been funded through the HIDTA program. 404 Media has reported that the HIDTA program is being used to aggregate location data on Americans derived

911 NE 11TH AVENUE
SUITE 630
PORTLAND, OR 97232
(503) 326-7525

405 EAST 8TH AVE
SUITE 2020
EUGENE, OR 97401
(541) 431-0229

2411 NW CARDEN AVE
SUITE 207
PENDLETON, OR 97801
(571) 364-6263

U.S. COURTHOUSE
310 WEST 6TH ST
ROOM 118
MEDFORD, OR 97501
(541) 858-5122

THE JAMISON BUILDING
131 NW HAWTHORNE AVE
SUITE 107
BEND, OR 97701
(541) 330-9142

707 13TH ST, SE
SUITE 285
SALEM, OR 97301
(503) 589-4555

[HTTPS://WYDEN.SENATE.GOV](https://wyden.senate.gov)

from Flock, Axon, and other vendors' ALPRs. In reports to Congress, ONDCP has disclosed that the Houston HIDTA administers and maintains the "National HIDTA ALPR Program." According to the most recent report to Congress:

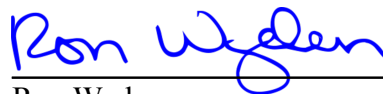
The HIDTA Program continues to serve as leader in cooperative data sharing amongst law enforcement agencies by facilitating linkage of ALPR cameras and the data they generate to the DEA-administered ALPR system housed at [the El Paso Intelligence Center], which ingests ALPR data from partner agencies across the country and stores the data in a nationally consolidated database that is available to all program participants. This creates a significant force multiplier by allowing participants not only to share their own ALPR data with other law enforcement agencies but to also to access data from partner agencies. [...] Houston HIDTA is also developing a new system to enhance ALPR information sharing, which will facilitate law enforcement access to multiple vendors' systems operating through HIDTA regions.

For its work in administering that ALPR program, which the White House commended for "bring[ing] together all levels of law enforcement," the Houston HIDTA was named "HIDTA of the Year" in April. The Houston HIDTA is reportedly not the only HIDTA program directing funds toward ALPR cameras and databases; a memorandum of understanding reported on by 404 Media describes an "LPR Database" run by the Atlanta-Carolinas HIDTA and previous reporting has indicated that the Chicago HIDTA funded the placement of ALPRs in the Chicagoland area.

There is currently limited transparency into these HIDTA-funded surveillance programs, but ONDCP has commissioned an assessment into the privacy practices of these programs that should be released to the public. After I raised concerns with the Hemisphere Project, ONDCP told my staff that it had commissioned a review of privacy issues related to the HIDTA program. This review was conducted by MITRE and completed in 2024, but ONDCP refused to provide it to my office and has subsequently not made that report public. I urge you to make this review public. Additionally, in its 2024 report to Congress, ONDCP indicated that it had initiated a project on an "analysis of automated license plate reader systems and practices." If that analysis is not included in the review conducted by MITRE, I request that you make that analysis public as well.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter. If you have any questions about this request, please contact Shreyas Gandlur in my office.

Sincerely,



Ron Wyden

United States Senator