



Social Media Surveillance:

**A PRIMER**

## SUMMARY: S.686 - THE RESTRICT ACT

Restricting the Emergence of Security Threats that Risk Information and Communications Technology Act or the RESTRICT Act

This bill requires federal actions to identify and mitigate foreign threats to information and communications technology (ICT) products and services (e.g., social media applications). It also establishes civil and criminal penalties for violations under the bill.

Specifically, the Department of Commerce must identify, deter, disrupt, prevent, prohibit, investigate, and mitigate transactions involving ICT products and services (1) in which any foreign adversary (such as China) has any interest, and (2) that pose an undue or unacceptable risk to U.S. national security or the safety of U.S. persons.

Additionally, Commerce must identify and refer to the President any covered holding (e.g., stock or security) that poses an undue or unacceptable risk to U.S. national security or the security and safety of U.S. persons. If the President determines that the holding poses such a risk, the President may compel divestment of or otherwise mitigate the risk associated with the holding.

Commerce may (1) designate any foreign government or regime as a foreign adversary upon a determination that the foreign government or regime is engaged in a long-term pattern or serious instances of conduct significantly adverse to U.S. national security or the security and safety of U.S. persons, and (2) remove such a designation. Commerce must notify Congress before making or removing a designation; these actions are subject to congressional disapproval.

The bill outlines (1) enforcement mechanisms, including actions by the Department of Justice; and (2) civil and criminal penalties for violations.

## FOREWORD

(Updated April 9, 2023)

Since this zine's creation, there have been sophistications to social media surveillance. At the time of this writing, Congress is courting the Restrict Act, misleadingly referred to as the "TikTok Ban"; this will criminalize any users who engage in communications with or services tied to nations that the US government has deemed foreign adversaries.

Our community's success at using social media to delegitimize the moral or objective veneer of the state's actions is precisely the reason lawmakers are now seeking to codify their ability to censor and criminalize its users. When resistance movements and communities find ways to build power on social media platforms, motions such as the Restrict Act are predictable responses. Our current national fights against the criminalization of the existence of trans people, women's bodily autonomy, and Weelaunee forest defenders parallel concurrent events that are right at our doorsteps. L.A. has enforced bans of protests within 300 feet of property and attempted assessment of "damages" to City Hall after protests. These are coercive practices resulting from our vocal dissent of looming mega-events such as the Olympics, which we have taken both to the streets and online.

In the fight against social media surveillance, there will always be sophistications to anticipate. This zine is perennial in its intent to make meaning of our fight against the stalker state.



## INTRODUCTION

Social media has woven itself into every aspect of our lives, from our desire for connection to absolute consumption. But the purveyors and keepers of social media platforms aren't driven by altruistic desires to create spaces that foster our liberation. These corporations have the same objectives of commodification and control that the state, capitalists, and settlers have always worked toward.

This is marked by how quickly consumable content can be restricted by these platforms, specifically when it's deemed critical of white supremacist power structures. Black communities bear the brunt of this censorship. Black Lives Matter groups have reported being "shadowbanned" on various media platforms. Black creators on TikTok also experienced a drastic reduction in their views on videos containing #BlackLivesMatter and other related hashtags during the peak of the 2020 uprisings. These clear examples of political repression are just a few from the myriad that point to social media platforms' reinforcement of state violence. They are a tool in the state's arsenal to help enact racist state violence.

# THE “SOCIAL NETWORK ANALYSIS”

Social media must be understood in relation to the “social network analysis” that the stalker state has always pursued. Long before social media apps expanded and publicized our immediate networks, the state was looking for ways to track and assess social networks in order to criminalize different communities and political organizations through social network analysis. A 1981 FBI bulletin advised agents that “an investigator may want to gather and analyze interpersonal network relationships by counting the number of instances in which people interact.” The bulletin explained:

**“Where people are linked to others through the social relations identified above, they are also tied to society through membership bonds with various groups and organizations.”**

“Where people are linked to others through the social relations identified above, they are also tied to society through membership bonds with various groups and organizations.” As soon as modern social media started to become popular, it didn’t take long for government entities to flag them as effective tools for tracking and criminalizing social networks.

**“Around 12:20 a.m., the DOC notified the CP that an arrestee was streaming video on a jail transportation bus via a Black Lives Matter South Pasadena social media account. Lieutenant Heredia dispatched officers who were able to locate and take possession of the phone until the person was cited and released, at which point the phone was returned.”**

– ECHO PARK REHABILITATION AFTER ACTION REPORT, LOS ANGELES POLICE DEPARTMENT

# SOCIAL MEDIA AND LAPD

Police surveillance of social media has been directly tied to surveillance in the streets. At the same time that academic and corporate surveillance pioneers were developing new technologies such as “artificial intelligence” to analyze mass information from social and other sources, LAPD continued monitoring social media profiles through more analog means. Then in 2015 the LAPD released a Social Media User Guide legitimizing social media surveillance as an addition to their surveillance arsenal -- a harbinger for academic and corporate-led sophistications in how these mediums are surveilled. One year later, Jeffrey Brantingham, creator of the racist and now discredited predictive policing program PredPol, suggested using social media platforms to map gang networks, even going so far as identifying a “gang ‘Twitter-space’” through the geotagging of tweets in Latinx neighborhoods in Los Angeles.



In 2015, LAPD officially began collecting social media handles on field interview (FI) cards. Anyone stopped on the street was another entry point for LAPD to study and criminalize relationships, friendships, and communities, including those assembled through dissent and organizing.

**Below are ways that social media abetted the LAPD in recent years:**

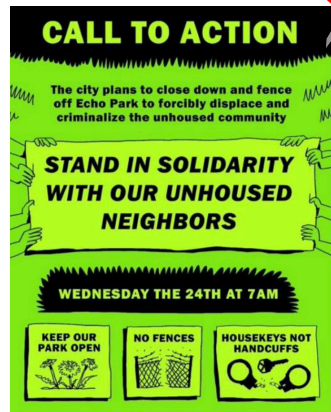
- LAPD released a list of surveilled hashtags, of which include #BlackLivesMatter #BlackLivesMatter-LA, Sandra Bland, Tamir Rice, and other topics relating to addressing anti-Black racist violence within policing.

**Surveilled hashtags:**

#BlackLivesMatter	#SandraBland
#LAPCFails	#TamirRice
#SayHerName	and more...

- Public records obtained by the Stop LAPD Spying Coalition show that Instagram posts were monitored during the 2020 uprisings to identify actions critical of policing and the individuals organizing them.

- This same analog monitoring was at play during the violent removal of the unhoused community at Echo Park Lake in March 2021; LAPD's after-action report identified many examples of the department using social media posts to vilify housing rights activists and unhoused community members.



**LAPD monitored social media profiles during the raid on Echo Park Lake to locate protestors.**

**ECHO PARK REHABILITATION AFTER ACTION REPORT  
LOS ANGELES POLICE DEPARTMENT**

Though the crowd was larger than anticipated, demonstrations remained peaceful. At 11:45 a.m., after several speeches, the crowd began to disperse on its own. Instead of releasing the officers assigned to the MFF, Captain Gonzalez placed the squad on standby to monitor a reoccurring protest that was scheduled to be held nearby at the Los Angeles Police Protective League (LAPPL) headquarters at 3:00 p.m.



The “Fund Services Not Police” protest held in front of the LAPPL building was organized by Black Lives Matter (BLM) and had been held every Wednesday during the month prior to the park closure. In prior weeks, the protests consisted of approximately 100 people and had always been peaceful. Despite the functional relationship the Rampart command had established with organizers, intelligence reports indicated that the group would march from the LAPPL building and continue their protest in Echo Park.

**Decision to Launch Operation Early**

At 7:07 p.m., the Twitter account @VPS\_Reports posted three photos of the staging area and the just completed roll call on social media with a caption urging people to respond to Echo Park to “help with defense.” The primary goal of OP 1 was to erect the fence around the park. The increased presence of people inside the park would make it more difficult for the City contractor to build the fence. Concern that a social media push for reinforcements would cause the park to become heavily populated by a large number of protestors caused the IMT to reassess the operational timeline.

Although the closure was not scheduled to begin until 10:00 p.m., at 7:50 p.m. Commander Graham made the decision to launch the operation early and deploy Department personnel as soon as practicable to prevent a large group from gathering inside the park. This proved to be challenging. DOT was responsible for establishing the outer perimeter by shutting





# Echo Park Rehabilitation

## Activist Activity

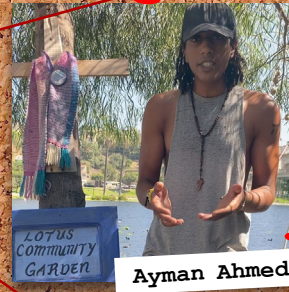
**CALL TO ACTION**

The city plans to close down and fence off Echo Park to forcibly displace and criminalize the unhoused community

**STAND IN SOLIDARITY WITH OUR UNHOUSED NEIGHBORS**

**WEDNESDAY THE 24TH AT 7AM**

- KEEP OUR PARK OPEN
- NO FENCES
- HOUSEKEYS NOT HANDCUFFS



In solidarity with Black Lives Matter

**DEFUND THE POLICE: RALLY FOR BLACK UNHOUSED LIVES**

Los Angeles' homeless population is disproportionately Black - and both Black and unhoused people are more likely to experience police violence. Join us for a rally to demand LA #DefundThePolice to fund #HouseKeysNotHandcuffs and #CareNotCops!

**SATURDAY, JUNE 13TH @ 3PM AT ECHO PARK LAKE BOAT HOUSE**

Unhoused people live in the park, please be respectful of their space.

bimlosangeles

**FUND SERVICES, NOT POLICE**

DOUBLE MASKED SOCIALLY DISTANCED

**WEDNESDAY, MARCH 24TH, 2021 3PM 1313 W. 8TH ST., LOS ANGELES**

#EndPoliceAssociations



1. The City of LA gave \$1 billion in subsidies to upscale hotels. These hotels have shut their doors to raise its need.

2. Garcetti has the legal authority to commandeer hotels to raise eminent domain & emergency powers

3. #DefundThePolice - Criminalizing homelessness and oversteering on policing exacerbate the homelessness crisis.

Sept 16 • 10:00am

**Give Public Comment at Wednesday's LA City Council Meeting**

Commandeer hotels to house every unhoused Angeleno now

Vishal P Singh @VPS\_Reports

LAPD is currently staging at Dodger's stadium. It's possible they will make their move against the **Echo Park Lake** tonight. If you can get to the park to help with defense; now is the time. (Pictures: Anonymous).

[#EchoParkRiseUp](#)

7:24 PM · 3/24/21 · Twitter for iPhone

4 Retweets 6 Likes

Street Watch LA @StreetWatchLA

NOW AT ECHO PARK LAKE: In the freezing, pouring rain, Park Rangers arrive with their garbage truck, threatening to sweep the unhoused community.

A sweep today could put lives at risk, and the verbal threat+presence of this truck alone are acts of state terror @MitchFarrell

9:31 AM · Dec 4, 2019 · Twitter for iPhone

54 Retweets 12 Quote Tweets 110 Likes

## Aftermath

**LEARN MORE**

JOIN US FOR A COMMUNITY TOWN HALL ON **TUESDAY, MAY 17TH AT 6 PM. AT THE ROBINSON S.P.A.C.E.**

104 ROBINSON ST. LOS ANGELES, CA 90026

BRENNAN CENTER FOR JUSTICE

**LAPD SOCIAL MEDIA MONITORING TOOLS**

BRENNAN CENTER FOR JUSTICE



**WATCH THE WATCHERS**

A PROJECT BY THE STOP LAPD SPYING COALITION

**KNOW YOUR LOCAL COPS**

A RESOURCE FOR SKID ROW COUNTER-SURVEILLANCE

APRIL 2023



# LAPD SOCIAL MEDIA MONITORING TOOLS

The LAPD bought licenses for Media Sonar for \$58,000 in fiscal year 2021.

## Digital Footprint

You will gain access to:

- A full digital snapshot of an individual's online presence including all related personas and connections
- 300+ data sources with 2 billion records compiled from:
  - o Public records
  - o Business listings
  - o Marketing lists
  - o Phone directories
  - o Crowd-sourced data

You will be able to:

**Easily gather a full digital view**

Using the Digital Footprint function, develop and save a full picture of a threat's digital identity and presence.

**Gain unexpected leads**

Learn associated user names, emails and additional key information.



**MEDIA SONAR**

LAPD sensationalized this event as

**"PLANNED PROTEST"**

LEARN MORE

JOIN US FOR A COMMUNITY TOWN HALL ON

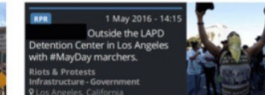
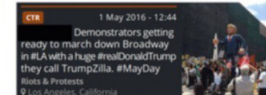
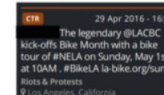
TUESDAY, MAY 17TH AT 6 PM. AT THE ROBINSON S.P.A.C.E

ROBINSON ST. LOS ANGELES, CA 90026

BRENNAN CENTER FOR JUSTICE



**Los Angeles May Day Protests** - (1 May 2016) Dataminr supported the LAPD RACR unit as they monitored May Day protests. Notifications containing locations and images provided situational awareness and helped users track protest movements. Using Dataminr's advanced geospatial application, a Dataminr representative and RACR Officer John Alipio uncovered previously unknown information.



**Bike Rides Coincides with May Day Protests**

The geospatial app revealed a tweet from a bicyclist about a pre-organized Sunday Funday bike ride scheduled during the protests. Further analysis uncovered a Facebook page about the event.

**First Images of Anti-Trump Protest**

Dataminr uncovered the first images of anti-Trump protesters at Broadway and Olympic Blvd before they were captured in the street cam feed. The LAPD was able to zoom cameras into the exact location of the event based on the street sign and restaurant visible in Dataminr's notification.

**Protest at the LAPD Detention Center**

LAPD users monitoring the terms "protest," "march," and "mayday" in the geospatial app surfaced a tweet from the LA Black Lives Matter gathering in front of the LAPD detention center. With this tip, users continued to track the event in the geospatial app and uncovered the first images of people at the protest site.

LAPD scheduled a trial with Dataminr to coincide with a May Day protest in 2016 that, according to the company, included "[n]otifications containing locations and images" in order to "track protest movements," including information sourced from Black Lives Matter LA's Twitter account.

**Dataminr**

In early 2022, LAPD circulated internal alerts about the Stop LAPD Spying Coalition's announcements on social media about a town hall we hosted to learn about social media surveillance from community organizers, a lawyer, and a journalist. LAPD manufactured alarm about the event, sensationalizing it as a "Planned Protest" and "demonstration to protest alleged LAPD social media surveillance" that might threaten nearby police "assets".

# SOCIAL MEDIA PROVIDERS ARE COMPLICIT

Social media companies aid law enforcement agencies in facilitating targeted surveillance. Meta (Instagram, Facebook) introduced a function that allows law enforcement to freeze and store posts from social media accounts of individuals targeted for criminalization. LAPD's instructional videos on the practice even encourage violating the platforms' policies and creating fictitious online accounts to ensure anonymity as officers pore through social media accounts. It's worth noting that creating fictitious personas has been a core component of LAPD's Intelligence Gathering Guidelines since 2012.

In 2015, LAPD officially began collecting social media handles on field interview (FI) cards. Anyone stopped on the street was another entry point for LAPD to study and criminalize relationships,

**Third party social media surveillance software has further entrenched this partnership between social media providers and law enforcement:**

- Documents obtained in a lawsuit recently revealed LAPD's widespread use of Geofeedia, a social media surveillance software advertised for its utility in surveilling dissent.

15	THE BRENNAN CENTER FOR JUSTICE AT NEW YORK UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF LAW,	Case No. 20STCP03820
16		<b>FIRST AMENDED COMPLAINT FOR DECLARATORY AND INJUNCTIVE RELIEF AND VERIFIED PETITION FOR WRIT OF MANDATE</b>
17	Plaintiff,	
18	vs.	
19	CITY OF LOS ANGELES, LOS ANGELES POLICE DEPARTMENT,	
20	Defendant.	
21		
22		

- The location information collected by social media platforms in order to deliver advertisements can be sold to anyone interested in mapping all of our locations and movements, along with our thoughts and relationships.



- Dataminr, surveillance software that was used by LAPD to monitor the 2020 uprisings, is partly owned by Twitter and is listed as an official partner of the social media platform.



## CONCLUSION

The police state's need for access to content has resulted in platforms expanding their invasive entry into our lives, monitoring and assessing what we consume to ensure we have more to consume. Through the commodification of our attention, our values, and our information, social media platforms are datafying our bodies in the same way as many other agencies that profit from our surveillance. It is through this lens that we must view social media as a tool that enriches the stalker state and expands surveillance capitalism deeper into our lives.

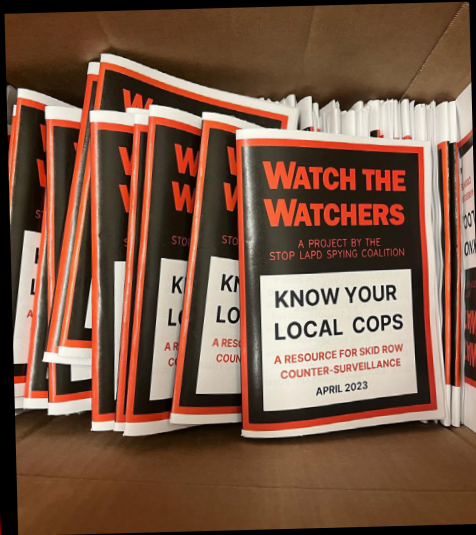
The capitalists running platforms like Meta and Twitter directly benefit from our surveillance. The corporate ties between social media services are inextricable from our daily lives and the violent state that seeks to control us. They are operational, institutional, and ideological, and all part of an ecology that we need to organize against systemically beyond just specific programs and policies. Working to dismantle LAPD's social media surveillance will mean reckoning with the symbiotic relationship these platforms have to violence against our communities.

# NOTES

# STOP LAPD SPYING!



stoplapdspying



Liked by you and 1,603 others

@stoplapdspying What's @cityattorneyla going to do, send police to our homes to seize these books?

To Learn More

Email [stoplapdspying@gmail.com](mailto:stoplapdspying@gmail.com)

or Follow [@stoplapdspying](https://www.instagram.com/stoplapdspying)