



Written by [Joe Wolverton, II, J.D.](#) on November 13, 2013

Seattle Latest City to Install DHS Surveillance Equipment

Add Seattle to the list of local governments taking money from the Department of Homeland Security to put their citizens under federal surveillance.

Seattle newspaper [The Stranger](#) reports:

If you're walking around downtown while looking at a smartphone, you will probably see at least one — and more likely two or three — Wi-Fi networks named after intersections: "4th&Seneca," "4th&Union," "4th&University," and so on. That is how you can see the Seattle Police Department's new wireless mesh network, bought from a California-based company called Aruba Networks, whose clients include the Department of Defense, school districts in Canada, oil-mining interests in China, and telecommunications companies in Saudi Arabia.



Perhaps wiring the city with high-tech, federally funded surveillance equipment is what Seattle mayor meant when [he described the city's budget](#) as "a moral document. It puts resources behind our vision of the city we want to see."

Apparently, part of those resources are coming from the federal government and they are earmarked for use to putting the city under the vision of the Department of Homeland Security.

When pressed for details about his department's new monitoring agreement with DHS, Seattle Police Department Detective Monty Moss said he "is not comfortable answering policy questions when we do not yet have a policy," as reported by *The Stranger*. The paper continues:

But, Detective Moss added, the SPD "is actively collaborating with the mayor's office, city council, law department, and the ACLU on a use policy." The ACLU, at least, begs to differ: "Actively collaborating" is not how they would put it. Jamela Debelak, technology and liberty director of the Seattle office, says the ACLU submitted policy-use suggestions months ago and has been waiting for a response.

It's not just visitors and residents of downtown Seattle that will now be watched and constantly tracked by local and federal law enforcement, but people moving around the city's busy port will be treated to the same surveillance. Again, from *The Stranger*:

Meanwhile, the SPD was also dealing with the port-camera surveillance scandal. That kicked off in late January, when people in West Seattle began wondering aloud about the 30 cameras that had appeared unannounced on utility poles along the waterfront. The West Seattle neighborhood blog



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(westseattleblog.com) sent questions to city utility companies, and the utilities in turn pointed at SPD, which eventually admitted that it had purchased and installed 30 surveillance cameras with federal money for “port security.”

Seattle is only the latest metropolitan area to be caught in the web of DHS surveillance. As [The New American has reported](#), [Las Vegas](#), [Baltimore](#), New York City, New Jersey, and as many as 60 other locations have taken DHS grant money in exchange for installing cameras, microphones, and other surveillance apparatus.

It’s simple to see why cash-strapped cities would welcome federal largesse, but what’s in it for Homeland Security?

DHS is proud of the success of its program to use federal funds to save struggling police departments and sheriff’s offices, converting them into “partners” with the massive and unconstitutional federal agency.

“We have brought resources and expertise to our law enforcement partners and built new mechanisms to share information. This includes investments in training for local law enforcement and first responders of all types in order to increase expertise and capacity at the local level,” DHS states on its website.

These “new mechanisms” include powerful surveillance cameras and network towers that trace cellphones and computers.

How is all this new technology being used? Who is being watched? Why are they being targeted for surveillance? Neither law enforcement nor federal agents are talking.

The web of surveillance being woven by the Department of Homeland Security among local law-enforcement agencies is usually part of the secretive effort known as the Buffer Zone Protection Program. Although the original web page describing the Buffer Zone Protection Program has been removed, [another DHS](#) site explains:

The Buffer Zone Protection Program (BZPP) is a Department-administered infrastructure protection grant program to help local law enforcement and first responders identify and mitigate vulnerabilities at the highest-risk critical infrastructure sites. A buffer zone is the area outside a facility that an adversary can use to conduct surveillance or launch an attack. The term is associated with identified critical infrastructure and key resources (CIKR).

BZPP provides funding to local law enforcement for equipment acquisition and planning activities to address gaps and enhance security capabilities. The program brings together private sector security personnel and first responders in a collaborative security planning process that enhances the buffer zone.

Local police who participate in the program will have access to a shockingly broad array of personal information of citizens. Facial recognition technology, license plate readers, and traffic light camera video feeds will all be funneled to a Regional Operations Intelligence Center where FBI, police, and DHS agents can watch the live feeds.

These hubs are part of a larger operations complex known as a fusion center.

The following information is taken from [a fact sheet on fusion centers](#) posted on the DHS website: “A fusion center is a collaborative effort of two or more agencies that provide resources, expertise and information to the center with the goal of maximizing their ability to detect, prevent, investigate, and



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respond to criminal and terrorist activity.”

A description of the functioning of these incubators for the forthcoming federal police force is also provided on the DHS site:

State and major urban area fusion centers (fusion centers) serve as primary focal points within the state and local environment for the receipt, analysis, gathering, and sharing of threat-related information among federal, state, local, tribal, and territorial (SLTT) partners.... Fusion centers conduct analysis and facilitate information sharing, assisting law enforcement and homeland security partners in preventing, protecting against, and responding to crime and terrorism.

The literature promoting the acceptance of fusion centers lists several ways the new federal agency will impose its will on the formerly autonomous and accountable police chief or county sheriff.

First, the feds will decide where and when to deploy local police department personnel. The chief, if he still exists, will be no more than a functionary required to make sure that the orders of the federal government are carried out. More likely than not, these new missions, in addition to preventing crime in the city or county, will engage in the collection of information about and apprehension of those local citizens identified by a committee in Washington as posing a threat to national security. Consider the revelation in 2009 that Homeland Security’s Office of Intelligence and Analysis released a document entitled “[Rightwing Extremism: Current Economic and Political Climate Fueling Resurgence in Radicalism and Recruitment](#),” which listed war veterans, anti-abortion activists, small-government advocates, and those concerned about immigration as terrorist risks.

Second, DHS (or whichever one of the federal agencies eventually takes over law-enforcement duties) will train new recruits. Policies, procedures, and purposes will not reflect traditional (and constitutional) goals of law enforcement, but will be tailored to training officers to perform those duties associated with the new, national emphasis of the force, with a slant toward federalism.

Finally, funds for this conversion from local police department to outpost of the federal law-enforcement agency will be provided by the bureaucrats on Capitol Hill. This is nothing less than the use of taxpayer money to fund the deprivation of taxpayers’ freedom.

So far, the DHS has marked 1,849 locations scattered throughout the 50 states that will serve as regional surveillance collection centers. As part of the department’s 2010 budget, \$48 million was spent establishing the centers.

There is a major constitutional obstacle to such constant monitoring of citizens: the Fourth Amendment. [The Fourth Amendment reads:](#)

The right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures, shall not be violated, and no warrants shall issue, but upon probable cause, supported by oath or affirmation, and particularly describing the place to be searched, and the persons or things to be seized.

Such sweeping surveillance technology does not conform to the constitutional requirement that all searches be reasonable and be conducted with warrants based on probable cause.

Given the power of the tools being brought by DHS into cities and towns as they take effective control of local law enforcement, it is difficult to determine who is being watched, why they are being watched, and who is doing the watching.

Although the newest network surveillance equipment is confined to downtown Seattle, *The Stranger*



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reports, “the SPD has indicated in PowerPoint presentations — also acquired by *The Stranger* — that it hopes to eventually have ‘citywide deployment’ of the system that, again, has potential surveillance capabilities that the SPD declined to answer questions about. That could give a whole new meaning to the phrase ‘real-time situational awareness.’”

Citizens and tourists should be aware of the otherwise unnoticed widening of the federal government’s surveillance net and of the undeniable fact that their own tax dollars are being used to build the local outposts of the global gulag.

Update (11/14/13): *Seattle media are reporting that the Seattle Police Department has agreed to deactivate the DHS-funded surveillance network it recently installed in downtown Seattle. Police spokesman Sean Whitcomb told The New American today that interim police chief Jim Pugel decided Tuesday to turn off the system. Whitcomb further informed the media that the surveillance equipment would not go back online until the city council approves such a move after “a vigorous public debate.” Calls to the Seattle City Council were unreturned and there are no reports of a timetable for consideration of the restart of the surveillance system.*

Photo of downtown Seattle skyline

Joe A. Wolverton, II, J.D. is a correspondent for The New American and travels frequently nationwide speaking on topics of nullification, the NDAA, and the surveillance state. He is the host of The New American Review radio show that is simulcast on YouTube every Monday. Follow him on Twitter @TNAJoeWolverton and he can be reached at jwolverton@thenewamerican.com



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