



Written by [Joe Wolverton, II, J.D.](#) on May 18, 2023

## Police Pushing Private Security Systems for Live Video Surveillance

In Book 5 of his *Politics*, Aristotle presented the predictable patterns followed by tyrants in their slow and subtle abolition of liberty. One of the tactics employed by the despots is to keep the people under surveillance in order to gather information on anyone who speaks or acts — even at home — against the policies of the regime.

That book was written more than 2,000 years ago, and yet governments around the globe continue going to great lengths to keep the people they rule over under constant surveillance so as to prevent them from uniting in opposition to the oppression.



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Consider this [story published by the Electronic Frontier Foundation \(EFF\)](#):

Police have their sights set on every surveillance camera in every business, on every porch, in all the cities and counties of the country. Grocery store trips, walks down the street, and otherwise minding your own business when outside your home could soon come under the ever-present eye of the government. In a quiet but rapid expansion of law enforcement surveillance, U.S. cities are buying and promoting products from Georgia-based company Fusus in order to access on-demand, live video from public and private camera networks.

The company sells police a cloud-based platform for creating real-time crime centers and a streamlined way for officers to interface with their various surveillance streams, including predictive policing, gunshot detection, license plate readers, and drones. For the public, Fusus also sells hardware that can be added to private cameras and convert privately-owned video into instantly-accessible parts of the police surveillance network. In Atlanta, Memphis, Orlando, and dozens of other locations, police officers have been asking the public to buy into a Fusus-fueled surveillance system, at times sounding like eager pitchmen trying to convince people and businesses to trade away privacy for a false sense of security.

Perhaps more surprising than the co-opting of camera data by police is the fact that it isn't surprising! Go back and read the names of a couple of the large cities that have already adopted the Fusus surveillance system: Atlanta and Memphis. A simple Google search will reveal the shocking crime rates in those two metropolises.

Consequently, one could see how easily police could convince residents to install Fusus cameras in and around their homes and neighborhoods, and how those same people, fearful of the seemingly unstoppable rise in violent crime, could be further compelled to give law enforcement unfiltered access to all the sights and sounds recorded by the new security systems.



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This scenario is a very 21st-century manifestation of an age-old ruse perpetrated by power-hungry men bent on fomenting fear in order to compel the people to grant them unlimited power in exchange for some relief from the demobilizing threat of crime.

Consider the case of Pisistratus.

Pisistratus was a man who wanted desperately to be the sole ruler of Athens. He tried for years, and then around 560 B.C. came up with a scheme that finally worked. He waited until Athens was torn apart by partisan conflict, and then he and some of his supporters rode out of town, cut themselves and their animals with swords and knives, and then rode back into Athens, telling the people that they had been attacked and nearly killed by a group of violent murderers.

The Athenians, motivated by fear of attack by the made-up murderers, allowed Pisistratus and his supporters to seize the people's weapons (to prevent additional violence) and take them up to the hill in Athens where the government sat — the Acropolis. Then, claiming that there was still a grave threat from the violent murderers, Pisistratus and his supporters fortified the hill and surrounded it with armed guards, insisting, still, that such drastic measures were necessary to keep the government and the people safe from armed criminals.

Now, it is unlikely that the political leaders in Atlanta and Memphis are conspiring with criminals to cause the people to cower in fear to the degree that they would surrender their liberty, but there is no question that as the crime rate rises, the people's tolerance for totalitarianism increases proportionally.

EFF reports that it has records revealing that nearly 150 jurisdictions have purchased the Fusus surveillance systems. Such installation widens the surveillance net, making it nearly impossible for a person to avoid being watched, and given the partnership between police and Fusus, we are all being watched by government.

And it is the nearly inextricable collusion of police and the federal law-enforcement bureaucracy — Homeland Security, the NSA, the FBI, etc. — that triggers the protections offered by the U.S. Constitution.

As EFF explains:

Police surveillance threatens constitutionally protected activities. It gives police the ability to surreptitiously spy on and track people of no real or alleged criminal concern. It creates caches of sensitive, personal information that can be retained indefinitely. Fusus is compounding these issues by expanding police access to surveillance cameras and integrating the cameras with a number of other surveillance services. This increases the ways police are able to record, track, and marginalize communities.

And it's not just Fusus.

Amazon's Ring home security service has entered into contracts with over 200 police departments, giving law enforcement expansive access to the video and audio collected by the service's surveillance devices.

A visit to Amazon's Ring Security System's product page reveals to possible customers — and those worried about personal privacy — all the data that Amazon is making available, without prior permission or notice of Ring customers, to police departments.



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Additionally, EFF reports that not only does Fusus offer law enforcement the ability to access real-time security camera images, but the company facilitates the sharing of that data with other agencies, including agencies of the federal government. In other words, police can not only keep citizens under near-constant surveillance, but the real-time feed from the thousands of Fusus cameras can be instantly transferred to any other government entity interested in keeping tabs on every man, woman, and child in America.

Finally, the report published by EFF discloses where the money for the purchase of Fusus surveillance systems is coming from:

Funding for the Fusus system is coming from multiple sources, including civil asset forfeiture funds and COVID relief grants awarded through the American Rescue Plan (ARPA).

One need not have a very active or conspiratorial imagination to conceive of the very nefarious uses to which law enforcement — local, state, and federal — could put the surveillance network spreading wider and wider every day. Is it too far-fetched to foresee a time when government agencies foment fear of some deadly disease, and in order to prevent the spread of this contagion police will claim the need to identify and apprehend anyone refusing to submit to being vaccinated, in the name of public safety?

Americans worried about the expansion of government surveillance should oppose the funding and deploying of security cameras that could be used to facilitate the denial of liberty of those now forced to exist under the never-blinking eye of tyranny.



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