



Written by [Staff](#) on February 19, 2018

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Inside Track

ICE to Deploy License-plate Recognition Software

Technology news website The Verge reported on January 26, “The Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agency has officially gained agency-wide access to a nationwide license plate recognition database, according to a contract finalized earlier this month. The system gives the agency access to billions of license plate records and new powers of real-time location tracking.”

According to the General Services Administration website, ICE has awarded a contract “to obtain query based access to a commercially available License Plate Reader (LPR) database.” While the recipient of the contract is not identified on the website, the story published by The Verge indicates that Vigilant Solutions will be providing the license plate readers to ICE.

Vigilant Solutions, an LPR manufacturer that’s been the recipient of numerous government contracts, boasts of being a “trusted provider to tens of thousands of law enforcement professionals.” The Vigilant Solutions database reportedly “contains 2 billion entries,” with “70 million additional license plate photographs being added each month.”

The Verge asserts: “ICE agents would be able to query that database in two ways. A historical search would turn up every place a given license plate has been spotted in the last five years, a detailed record of the target’s movements. That data could be used to find a given subject’s residence or even identify associates if a given car is regularly spotted in a specific parking lot.”

Simplicity is the selling point of this technology, according to information provided by Vigilant on its website. “Plate capture is simple,” they boast. And, “Facial Recognition is made incredibly simple and convenient on the Mobile Companion [smartphone app]. Simply take a picture, or upload an image from a file or from social media, and match against the available gallery. Vigilant prepopulates the gallery with mugshot data, CrimeStopper data, and registered sex offender data. Agency Managers may upload additional images into their gallery (using the web interface) for better matching against local known individuals.”

The expansion of the surveillance state is creating a country where there isn’t an unmonitored place in the real or cyber world.

Britain’s Socialized Healthcare System Is Overwhelmed

The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) reported January 11 that patients are dying in the United Kingdom’s socialized hospital corridors as safety is compromised by “intolerable” conditions. Of course, the BBC did not attribute such horrific conditions to the fact that the British healthcare system is socialized. Instead, in typical socialist fashion, the solution offered was that more tax dollars need to be pumped into the system.

Sixty-eight physicians sent an open letter to Prime Minister Theresa May, informing her of the massive problems they are facing in British hospitals. The letter, from doctors in England and Wales, informed May that “patients are having to sleep in makeshift wards set up in side rooms; trolley waits of up to 12 hours are being routinely seen as staff struggle to find free beds; thousands of patients are left stuck in the back of ambulances waiting for staff to take them in; and more than 120 patients a day are being



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managed in corridors in some places. And some are dying prematurely.”

Chris Hopson, speaking for the National Health Service (NHS), naturally blamed underfunding of the socialized healthcare system. “We have reached a watershed moment where either we fund the NHS to the extent that is needed to meet those standards or, and this is absolutely not what we want, we abandon those standards.... We are now at the point where we cannot deliver the NHS constitutional standards without a long-term funding settlement.”

If quality of care is the standard by which the system is to be judged, Britain’s socialized system has always been a failure: Fifty years after the NHS began, the U.K. government released the Atcheson Report, which showed that inequality in treatment between rich and poor was worse than when the system started, with poorer people having vastly lower survival rates for treatments.

Perhaps this should teach us to avoid socialized medicine in the United States. While it is politically possible to oppose socialized medicine before it is implemented, once implemented, it is almost impossible to abolish it, no matter how obvious it is that it is not working.

Trump Plans to Relocate U.S. Embassy to Jerusalem by 2019

The Trump administration appears to be preparing to move the U.S. Embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem by 2019, “despite insisting last month that the move would not happen until the end of President Trump’s term,” reported the *New York Times* January 18. This comes after President Trump officially recognized Jerusalem as the capital of Israel in early December.

Talk of moving up the timeline first came via comments from Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who told reporters January 17 in India that the embassy would be moved “much faster than people think, within a year from today.”

President Trump initially appeared to balk at the idea of a quick transfer of the embassy, responding to Netanyahu’s prediction by saying that Israel and the United States were “talking about different scenarios,” and that “we’re not really looking at that” timeline. However, within 24 hours both the *New York Times* and the *Wall Street Journal* reported that Trump and Netanyahu appeared to be on the same page regarding the move.

The original plan for the move called for the construction of a new high-security embassy complex in Jerusalem, something Secretary of State Rex Tillerson had said would be completed “probably no earlier than three years out, and that’s pretty ambitious.”

However, reported the *New York Times*, “the State Department has since settled on a more modest plan to convert an existing consular building in Arnona, a neighborhood in West Jerusalem. That will reduce the cost of the project and allow Ambassador David M. Friedman and his staff to move there as early as next year.”

But the Associated Press reported January 22 that, according to a number of U.S. officials, the Arnona complex would serve only as an interim embassy until the permanent facility envisioned by Tillerson could be constructed in Jerusalem. The most likely scenario would have Ambassador Friedman and his top aides and staff moving to the temporary facility as early as April 2019, while retaining their offices in the Tel Aviv embassy.



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Venezuela's Crude Oil Exports to U.S. Declining Sharply

The flow of Venezuelan heavy crude oil to U.S. Gulf Coast refineries dropped by 60 percent in the first three weeks of January, according to data from the U.S. Energy Information Agency (EIA). Shipments had been averaging around a million barrels a day, but have dropped to 394,000 barrels per day since the first of the year.

The news from the EIA is not surprising. Reuters reported in early January that Venezuela's crude production last year fell by 13 percent from the year before, hitting a 28-year low. This follows a six-year decline in production that tracks closely with the imposition of "Chavism," the political ideology that wealth can be created through government edict rather than capital investment.

For a while it looked like Chavism was working. Revenues from Venezuela's vast crude oil reserves allowed Hugo Chávez to expand Venezuela's welfare state, resulting in socialists around the globe declaring his country an economic miracle. But then oil revenues started declining, and Chávez died in 2013. Nicolás Maduro (a former bus driver and union organizer) took over and proceeded to run this economic "miracle" into the ground.

Credit must also be given to U.S. crude oil refineries for cutting the flow of Venezuelan heavy crude, and Maduro's resultant cash flow, in favor of other more reliable sources such as Mexico and Canada for the same product. It isn't politics that forced those refineries to cut their imports, but simple economics: They needed a dependable, reliable, steady source of crude and, thanks to Maduro's military takeover of his state-owned energy company PdVSA, Venezuela cannot provide it. Instead, PdVSA employees are leaving as a result of the company no longer being able to pay them, and they're taking with them valuable supplies and equipment to sell on the black market to feed themselves and their families.

As Winston Churchill said, "Socialism is a philosophy of failure, the creed of ignorance, and the gospel of envy. Its inherent virtue is the equal sharing of misery."



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