



Written by [Staff](#) on February 3, 2020

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Inside Track

Amazon Admits Employees Secretly Watched Ring Camera Customers



AP Images

In a January 6 letter to U.S. senators, tech behemoth Amazon admitted that it has fired employees discovered to have been spying on customers using the company's Ring cameras.

Although the Ring cameras were originally marketed as a way to see who's standing outside the front door before opening it, many users have installed the surveillance equipment inside their houses.

Amazon's eight-page letter was a response to inquiries made by five U.S. Democratic senators regarding the company's security policies and findings of the company's internal audits. In November 2019, Senators Ron Wyden (D-Ore.), Chris Van Hollen (D-Md.), Edward J. Markey (D-Mass.), Christopher A. Coons (D-Del.), and Gary C. Peters (D-Mich.) cosigned the letter looking for answers to questions about stories of privacy breaches being reported in the media.

The letter to legislators, signed by Amazon Vice President of Public Policy Brian Huseman, explains that Ring received four complaints regarding employees viewing Ring data "that exceeded what was necessary for their job functions." Huseman reports in the letter that "after determining that the individual violated company policy, the individual was terminated."

It is unclear whether Huseman means that one individual in each of the four complaints was fired, or whether the abuse of access to data reported to Ring resulted in the termination of only one of the employees investigated by Ring.

Just how many Americans have bought Amazon's Ring cameras is not known, and in the letter to the senators, Huseman refuses to disclose the number, revealing only that "millions of customers have purchased a Ring device."

While Ring customers are undeniably justified to fear hackers invading their homes through these devices or Ring employees watching them in unguarded moments, Ring has entered into contracts with over 200 police departments, giving law enforcement expansive access to the video and audio collected



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by the service's surveillance devices. Perhaps most troubling is the fact that the images and sounds recorded by Ring can be obtained from Ring customers without a warrant.

By Joe Wolverton, II, J.D.

Trumpers Floating Purchase of OAN Network as Fox Moves Leftward



A dozen GOP heavyweight donors are being pitched on the idea of buying the tiny One American News Network (OANN) to offset the steady leftward drift of Fox News. The *Wall Street Journal* reported January 10 that Republican National Committee co-chairman Thomas Hicks is helping his family's investment manager, Hicks Equity Partners, propose the buyout to big Trump donors.

Charles Herring, owner of OANN, said his family isn't really interested in being bought out. In an e-mail, he said that OANN is "a reliable news source for a national audience [and] with the 2020 political season in full swing, expressed interest [in buying us] is on the rise. Yet our family didn't build our operations to sell it."

Doug Deason is a Dallas investor and major Trump donor who has been pitched the idea and has signed on to it, offering to assist in raising the estimated \$250 million it would take for Herring's family to change its mind. He sees both the financial and the political advantages: "The concern is that there's only Fox. The left [-wing media] has so much more."

Fox has been steadily moving leftward since 2005 when Roger Ailes became chairman of the Fox Television News Corporation. With the lineup of left-wing commentators increasing in numbers, President Trump has been increasingly critical of Fox. Last summer he tweeted, "Watching Fake News CNN is better than Shepherd Smith [who suddenly departed Fox last October], the lowest rated show on FoxNews. Actually, whenever possible, I turn to OANN!"

At the moment the buyout of OANN is in the early stages, with much of the purchase money still to be raised. Investors might be looking at it as an opportunity to buy a small conservative network just as the presidential campaign is heating up. On the other hand, if purchased, its influence could gain as Fox loses more of its own, helping the president gain another four years in the White House along the way.

By Bob Adelman



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Record Abortions Expose Truth About Planned Parenthood



Flickr/FibonacciBlue

The latest annual report from Planned Parenthood lays plain the grim truth about America's leading killer of pre-born babies. During fiscal year 2018-19, Planned Parenthood and its sundry medical affiliates performed a total of 345,672 abortions, an increase of 12,915 from last fiscal year and up 24,288 from two years ago. During the latest time frame, the abortion business also received an astounding \$616 million in government funding via reimbursements and grants.

ChristianNews.net noted January 7 that the number of abortions for which Planned Parenthood was responsible during 2018-19 "equates to 947 a day, as the deaths of unborn children continue to climb with each passing year — an estimated 60 million children and counting since the 1973 Supreme Court decision of *Roe v. Wade*."

The Christian news site added, "According to online data, Planned Parenthood performed 4,988 abortions in 1973, 85,207 in 1983, 134,251 in 1993, 236,500 in 2003, and 327,166 in 2013."

Overall, although private donations have gone down, Planned Parenthood reported total revenue above \$1.6 billion, with net assets at almost \$2 billion. As for its federal tax-dollar haul, the \$616 million does not include some \$60 million in grants Planned Parenthood lost from the Department of Health and Human Services after President Trump moved to block federal funding for clinics that refer clients for abortion.

Despite the banner year, Planned Parenthood's acting president, Alexis McGill Johnson, complained that her organization stands "at an inflection point for reproductive health and rights. Our opponents moved to dismantle our nation's program for affordable birth control this year, forcing providers like Planned Parenthood out of the program with an unethical gag rule."

And while a number of state legislatures fronted bills to ban or severely curtail abortions over the past year, Planned Parenthood boasted that nearly 70 percent "of the more than 300 abortion restricting bills introduced in 2019 have been defeated or delayed until next year [2020]."

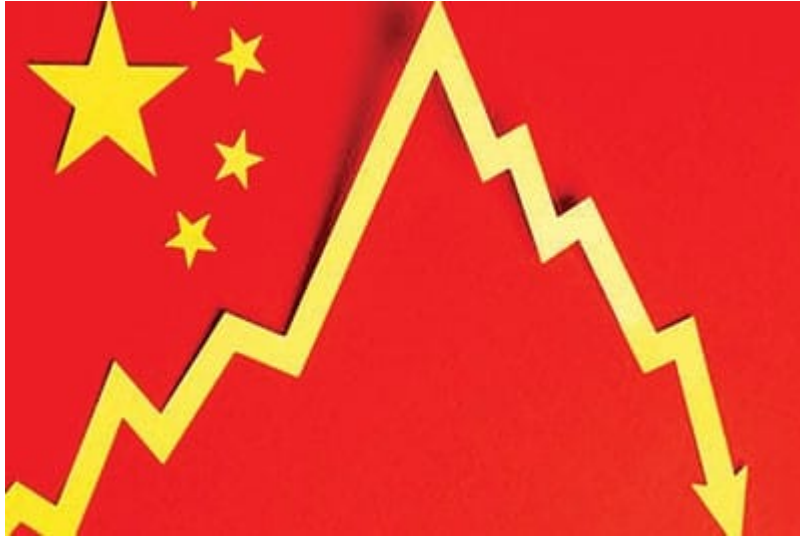
By Dave Bohon



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More and More Companies Moving Out of China



LemonTreeImages/iStock/GettyImagesPlus

The number of companies moving some, most, or all of their manufacturing operations out of China, or making plans to do so, is growing from a trickle to a flow and likely to a flood, according to a January 9 article in the *South China Morning Post*.

In July, the *Nikkei Asian Review* listed just a few of those companies, including Apple, Nintendo, Skechers USA, Komatsu, Sumitomo Heavy Industries, Mitsubishi Electric, Ricoh, Citizen Watch, Panasonic, HP, Dell, Kyocera, Sharp, Nintendo, GoPro, and Samsung. Each of them is facing rising labor and environmental costs and an ever-changing crazy-quilt regulatory system, not to mention the tariff wars that will likely continue long after the highly touted “Phase One” trade agreement has been signed with the United States.

And the flow is likely to turn into a flood, according to Dan Harris, head of an international law firm that works extensively in China: “For every foreign company that left China in 2019 there are two or three more seriously contemplating doing so. We expect more companies to leave China in 2020 than in 2019.”

As a direct result of those trade-war tariffs, China has now fallen behind Mexico and Canada to become America’s third-largest trading partner. Before the tariff wars began in July 2018, China was number one.

Compared with June 2018, the month before the trade war began, U.S. imports of goods from Vietnam have soared by more than 50 percent, Thailand nearly 20 percent, Malaysia by 11 percent, Indonesia over 14 percent, Taiwan 30 percent, and Mexico nearly 13 percent.

The ripple effect is showing up in car sales in China, which have dropped for the second consecutive year, dropping 5.8 percent in 2018 and 7.4 percent last year. December car sales were down, the 18th down month out of the last 19.

The day of “Made in China” is slowly but surely becoming “NOT Made in China.”

By Bob Adelman



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