



Written by [Joe Wolverton, II, J.D.](#) on August 5, 2019

Amazon Ring Is Selling Home Surveillance Access to Police Departments

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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.



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An e-mail obtained by Motherboard included notes written by the Waynesboro, Virginia, chief of police taken during a webinar he participated in that featured a Ring representative explaining to law-enforcement officers the use of something the Ring spokesman called the "Law Enforcement Neighborhood Portal."

The chief's e-mailed notes, according to Motherboard, revealed the personal access Amazon was selling. "This portal allows local police to see a map with the approximate locations of all Ring cameras in a neighborhood, and request footage directly from camera owners. Owners need to consent, but police do not need a warrant to ask for footage," the article reports.

The last few lines of the e-mail disclose the contact information of a Ring neighborhood's training manager, who will train client police departments on the use of the "Law Enforcement Portal."

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.

Monitor your property in HD video, and check-in on home at anytime with Live View on-demand video and audio.

Hear and speak to people on your property from your mobile device with the built-in microphone and speakers.

Activate the siren from your phone, tablet and PC to scare away any suspicious people caught on camera.

{modulepos inner_text_ad}

Perhaps most troubling is the fact that the images and sounds recorded by Ring can be obtained from Ring customers without a warrant. Admittedly, the homeowner would need to give permission to police, but pressure would be there, As millions of Americans are fond of saying, "If you haven't done anything wrong, you've got nothing to hide." So complying with a request from police for access to their security camera footage would be regarded by many as their civic duty.

There is a central tenet of Anglo-America law that is overlooked by those over-zealous to please the



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police: A person is innocent until proven guilty.

Advertisements created by Amazon display disregard for this key constitutional principle, too.

In an ad promoting the Ring Community service, Amazon declares:

Ring's Community Alerts help keep neighborhoods safe by encouraging the community to work directly with local police on active cases. Alerts are created using publicly posted content from the Neighbors app that has a verified police report case number. We get the explicit consent of the Ring customer before the content is posted, and utilize sponsored, geotargeted posts to limit the content to relevant communities. Community members can then directly share or post tips to help local police contact persons of interest or investigate crimes.

As part of this ad, Amazon published footage from a Ring surveillance camera provided by one of its customers. Along with the image of the unnamed woman was the caption, "This woman was caught on video breaking into a vehicle."

Did you catch the problem with that promo?

Was the woman in video still found guilty of breaking into a car? Was she charged? Was she tried? Was she found guilty by a jury of her peers?

In other words, was she afforded due process, as required for over 800 years by English and American constitutional law?

I imagine some of you are rolling your eyes at my suggestion that Amazon should be more careful before advertising accusations of criminal activity.

Let me offer the following frightening use of user-provided surveillance video footage: Two neighbors are arguing for months over some matter and the disagreement has escalated to a heated exchange of words. Now imagine that one of the neighbors subscribes to Amazon's Ring security system and he knows that he can give cops access to the images recorded by his Ring surveillance camera. He reviews the footage and finds an image of his neighbor trying to get into a car the neighbor owns, but accidentally locked himself out of. The car is parked on the street between the two houses.

Now, imagine you're the neighbor trying to get into your own car and you see a picture of yourself on Twitter posted by Amazon carrying the caption: "This woman was caught on video breaking into a vehicle."

Imagine that the neighbor's employer sees the ad and decides that he doesn't want to employ "a criminal."

This, dear readers, is the reason the Fourth Amendment exists. This is the reason that centuries of Anglo-American legal protections have guaranteed that an accused man is innocent until proven guilty, that he cannot be punished for a crime without being afforded the due process of law.

Finally, should corporations be able to sell police departments access to the names and addresses of people who've purchased the corporation's home security systems?

Should the police be able to bypass the constitutional mandate (and basic human right) that in order to keep people "secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures," "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?"



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Consider this statement made by James Otis, in his attack on the Writs of Assistance — unwarranted police intrusions into the homes of Americans that lit the fuse of the War for Independence: “Now, one of the most essential branches of English liberty is the freedom of one’s house. A man’s house is his castle; and whilst he is quiet, he is as well guarded as a prince in his castle.”

The bottom line is, regardless of Amazon’s sale to police departments of access to home surveillance video, the citizens who use the surveillance system and agree to law-enforcement access to their video footage cannot give the police permission to search or surveil the homes, papers, effects, or anything else of another person. This is a vital principle in the history of America and of the liberty her people should enjoy.



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