



Written by [Joe Wolverton, II, J.D.](#) on September 12, 2013

Las Vegas Installs 37 DHS Surveillance Cameras on the Strip

What happens in Vegas will be recorded by cameras provided by the Department of Homeland Security.

All along the storied Las Vegas Strip, 37 surveillance cameras watch and record every movement.

Such an expensive purchase might surprise citizens of Sin City given that the Metropolitan Police Department is in the middle of a hiring freeze and has laid off dozens of officers all over the city.



The effects of the deep budget cuts are likely to continue to be felt. [The Las Vegas Sun reports](#), "The outlook only threatens to worsen, with Metro facing a \$30 million budget deficit that could require it to shed as many as 250 additional officer positions over the next several years."

Homeland Security has deep pockets, though, and the federal government loves using largesse to co-opt control of local law enforcement.

The Las Vegas Police Department received \$300,000 from the federal Department of Homeland Security. This generous grant paid for the cameras and the sophisticated surveillance software that powers them.

Before the DHS carrot and stick appeared, there were only eight cameras covering the area now under expanded surveillance.

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.

New mechanisms such as powerful surveillance cameras.

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. According to DHS:

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



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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 stop 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 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



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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.

[A story reporting the installation of the new cameras](#) on the Las Vegas Strip includes a quote from a representative of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) in Nevada, accurately assessing the substantial threat to liberty posed by this expanded surveillance capacity.

Allen Lichtenstein, general counsel for the American Civil Liberties Union of Nevada, said while those on a public sidewalk do not really have a reasonable expectation of privacy, he worries about the police's use and storage of the footage, and added that the extra surveillance may not be worth giving up privacy.

"Over the last decade or two, we've given up a great deal of our privacy. A lot of which is not really necessary," Lichtenstein said. "The lack of accountability and transparency is something that we should all be concerned with."

"We're well beyond the point of '1984,'" he added, referencing George Orwell's novel about the world being under complete surveillance by a totalitarian government.

What was the Metropolitan Police's response to these legitimate concerns of potential invasions of privacy and violations of constitutionally protected freedom from unwarranted searches?

"We're not out to invade anyone's privacy," said police Captain Robert DuVall, [as reported by the Las Vegas Review-Journal](#).

Citizens of Las Vegas, as well as the millions of tourists that keep the billions of lights glowing on the Strip and the billions of dollars in casino owners' pockets, should be aware that every action — embarrassing or otherwise — will now be watched and recorded, thanks to the Metropolitan Police Department's partnership with the Department of Homeland Security.

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