

Principal Brief // two-minute read

- ALPR & VEHICLES
- LOCATION TRACKING
- DATA BROKERS



Your Car's Movements Are for Sale

Where your car has been is a twenty-dollar lookup for anyone with an investigator's license. The cameras are not the problem; the market is.

WHAT HAPPENED

Private and police camera networks hold tens of billions of plate scans with time and location. Data platforms sold to corporate security teams fold them in with credit and utility records, and resellers offer single lookups for about \$20 behind a self-attested check-box. A civil-liberties database lists more than 200 cases of officers misusing these systems, dozens of them to track partners.

WHY IT REACHES YOU

Your plate is on the outside of your car by law, and it is the cheapest link between the car and you. Once bought, a sighting history becomes your home, your commute, your children's school, and the pattern of your week. Nobody queried a DMV; nobody needed a warrant.

THREE THINGS TO TAKE FROM THIS

- 1

The exposure is at the broker, not the camera

Covers, films, and camera-avoidance guard the wrong layer. The buyer never touches a sensor; they buy the history after it is collected.
- 2

A check-box is the only gate

Resellers ask the buyer to attest to a permissible purpose: litigation, normal business, insurance. Nobody verifies it before the results appear.
- 3

The misuse is documented, not theoretical

One police chief queried his ex-girlfriend's plate 228 times; one officer, more than 2,000. The people with logins use them personally.

DO THIS

- ☐

YOU, THIS MONTH

Have someone run a commercial lookup on your own primary plate, so you know what an adversary can already buy today.
- ☐

YOU, WITH YOUR FAMILY OFFICE

Cut the plate-to-identity chain by removing your records from people-search sites and consumer brokers. A sighting that cannot be joined to a name is worth far less.
- ☐

YOU, WITH YOUR SECURITY LEAD

For sensitive movements, use ride-shares, rotate vehicles, and vary routines. Each breaks the link between one sighting and the next.

NOT THE STORY YOU MAY HAVE HEARD

This brief does not claim plate readers have no legitimate use; repossession, parking, and policing are real. It does not claim your plate is secret; it is public by design. The point is what the public plate buys once it is joined to everything else about you.

HOW SURE WE ARE

High on how the market is built and what it charges; the layers, prices, and misuse cases are on the record. Moderate on exact vendor coverage and query volumes, which are self-reported and keep moving.

THE FULL COMMAND BRIEF FOLLOWS: THE RECORD, THE THREE LAYERS, THE ECOSYSTEM IN NUMBERS, AND POSTURE BY FUNCTION.

CB-040

Automated License Plate Readers



"A principal's vehicle movement is a \$20 commercial lookup, no warrant required."

A protection posture that guards the plate at the sensor is solving the wrong layer. Vehicle movement is already a commercial product, priced by the lookup and gated only by a self-attested check-box. The exposure is not a future risk, it is a steady-state condition.

BLUF. Vendor mapping identifies 43 companies active in the U.S. ALPR ecosystem, 13 of which commercially sell plate-plus-geolocation data. The exposure on most U.S. executives runs through three converging layers: collection networks (DRN, a Motorola subsidiary, and Flock Safety) hold roughly 30 billion plate scans across 5,000-plus communities; enterprise intelligence platforms (Thomson Reuters CLEAR, LexisNexis Accurint, TransUnion TLOxp) integrate ALPR with credit headers, utility records, and identity data and market explicitly to corporate security teams; and a reseller layer exposes the stack to any licensed private investigator. Single-target movement history is a sub-\$1,000 deliverable, and pattern-of-life monitoring, the reconstruction of a person's routine from repeated sightings, is a sub-\$10,000 annual subscription.

The governing frame: the buyer never touches a sensor, never queries DMV data, and never violates a regulated dataset. A privacy posture aimed at protecting the plate at the point of capture is solving the wrong layer of the problem. The exposure lives at the brokerage layer, where a captured plate becomes a targeted individual.

The buyer never touches a sensor. Privacy aimed at the plate at the sensor is solving the wrong layer.

THE SIGNAL // WHAT RESET THE PICTURE

INSTITUTE FOR JUSTICE • APR 2026, UPDATED SEP 2026

A review published in April documented at least 14 cases of police officers using ALPR systems to stalk romantic partners or strangers, including a Key West deputy who tracked a woman he met while working security on a TV set and the police chief of Sedgwick, Kansas, who queried his ex-girlfriend and her new partner 228 times over four months. By September the Institute's running database of ALPR abuse listed more than 200 incidents, dozens of them stalking, and in August a Kentucky officer was arrested after searching an ex-girlfriend's plate more than 2,000 times. With roughly 700,000 sworn officers nationwide, the warrantless-query channel is structurally available regardless of internal vendor policy.

404 MEDIA • MAY 2025

Internal materials revealed Flock Safety's Nova product, designed to jump from license plate to person by combining plate data with more than 20 external sources, including consumer data brokers and breach-derived identifiers.

A citizen project built from audit logs released under public-records requests launched with 2.3 million license plates across roughly 138 million police search queries, letting an individual check whether their plate has been queried. By September 2026 it held 4.7 million plates and 243 million queries, and the vendor had threatened legal action against the site.

SINCE PUBLICATION · JUN TO AUG 2026

Flock Safety passed 100,000 deployed cameras in June. In the same period 53 municipalities across 20 states canceled or rejected contracts, most over federal immigration queries run against local data in breach of city policy, while nearly 800 cities approved new contracts in 2026. The network is growing and its governance is being contested at the same time; neither trend changes what a licensed buyer can purchase.

SO WHAT The people with the most access to your plate history are not adversaries who chose you; they are anyone with a login, and the record shows logins get used personally.

THE MECHANISM // THREE CONVERGING LAYERS

COLLECTION

DRN contracts with repossession and parking-enforcement operators to mount cameras on private vehicles, paying affiliates to feed a database its reseller describes as more than 15 billion sightings, growing by up to 220 million a month. Flock Safety places fixed cameras in 5,000-plus communities (HOAs, municipal partners, corporate campuses) into a single nationwide searchable network. Either system captures plate, time, and GPS coordinate without consent or notification.

ENTERPRISE PLATFORMS

Thomson Reuters CLEAR (20-plus billion sighting records), LexisNexis Accurint, and TransUnion TLOxp aggregate ALPR data alongside credit headers, utility records, voter rolls, and breach-derived identifiers, and market to corporate security teams under language like patterns of movement, non-obvious connections, and pattern-of-life information.

RESELLER

DRN's affiliate Delvepoint, plus aggregators like Searchbug and IRBsearch, expose the underlying data to any licensed private investigator at retail: about \$20 per single lookup, \$70 for live alerts on a target plate, \$350 to \$500 for a skip-trace deliverable, and \$750 to \$995 for an advanced-locate report. The only gate is a self-attested permissible purpose, a check-box claiming litigation development, normal course of business, or insurance activities.

FIGURE 1 // THE ECOSYSTEM, IN NUMBERS

43 U.S. ALPR firms mapped; 13 sell plate-plus-geolocation data. OIQ VENDOR MAPPING, 2026	~30_B Plate scans held by DRN and Flock across 5,000+ communities. VENDOR DISCLOSURES	\$20 Retail price of a single reseller lookup, gated by a check-box. RESELLER PRICE LISTS, 2026	4.7_M Plates across 243M police queries in the public audit-log dataset, up from 2.3M at launch. HAVEIBEEINFLOCKED.COM, SEP 2026
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SO WHAT Anyone with an investigator's license and twenty dollars can buy where your car has been, and the form asks only that they tick a box.

THE BEST CASE FOR THE OTHER SIDE

- + ALPR has genuine legitimate uses in law enforcement, repossession, and parking enforcement, and most queries are routine and lawful.
- + A license plate is public by design, displayed on every vehicle, so it is not sensitive personal data in the way an address or SSN is.

Concede the legitimate uses and the plate's public status. Neither protects a principal, the protected person at the center of a security program. The reseller layer gates access on a self-attested check-box, and more than 200 documented misuse incidents, dozens of them officers tracking partners, show the warrantless channel is structurally available regardless of policy. The plate being public is exactly what makes it a cheap join key, the shared field that links one record to another: once bought, it converts into a home, a commute, and a family routine, which is not public at all.

ASSESSMENT

FIGURE 2 // ANALYTIC CONFIDENCE BY CLAIM

Vehicle movement is a purchasable commercial commodity, priced from about \$20.	STRONG
The exposure lives at the brokerage layer, not the sensor.	STRONG
The only gate at the reseller layer is a self-attested permissible purpose.	STRONG / VENDOR TERMS AND PRICE LISTS
Officer misuse of ALPR query access is documented at scale, not anecdotal.	STRONG / MORE THAN 200 CATALOGED INCIDENTS
Exact per-vendor coverage and query volumes over time.	MODERATE / SELF-REPORTED AND MOVING
Physical countermeasures at the plate (covers, films, obscurants) close the exposure.	REJECTED / WRONG LAYER, AND UNLAWFUL IN MOST STATES
ALPR sighting data is reachable only by law enforcement.	REJECTED / THE RESELLER LAYER IS THE EXPOSURE

POSTURE

FOR PRINCIPALS

- Treat the plate as personal data. Operational planning that assumes plate-level anonymity is structurally outdated, because vehicle movement is a commodity priced from \$20.
- Establish a baseline. Commission a vendor query against the principal's primary-vehicle plate to document what an adversary can already buy today.

FOR FAMILY OFFICES

- Cut the plate-to-identity chain at the brokerage layer. Removing personal records from people-search sites and consumer brokers collapses the workflow that converts a captured plate into a targeted individual, and pairs with geo-specific monitoring for early signal that movement data is being correlated.

→ Brief teams that plate-level anonymity is no longer a valid planning assumption. For sensitive movements, ride-shares break plate correlation at the point of use, vehicle rotation adds noise to long-term collection, and varied routines and off-site secure meetings reduce the value of any single sighting.

CONFIDENCE High on the ecosystem structure and pricing; the vendor layers, retail prices, and documented misuse cases are on the record. High that the reseller gate is a self-attested permissible purpose, per the vendors' own terms. Moderate on exact per-vendor coverage and query volumes over time, which are self-reported and moving. Rejected: that plate-level physical countermeasures close the exposure, and that sighting data is reachable only by law enforcement.

METHOD Revised edition. First published 2 May 2026; facts re-verified and figures updated 10 September 2026. Built from vendor mapping and on-record disclosures, cross-read against the surveillance-economy and location-broker briefs (CB-073, CB-120). Changes at revision: misuse counts, dataset sizes, and network figures updated to current values, with the original April and January figures retained alongside so the trend is visible; format brought to v2.5.

SOURCES OIQ primary research and vendor mapping, 2026. Institute for Justice, report of 27 April 2026 (updated 3 September 2026) and the IJ Database of ALPR Abuse (222 incidents as of September 2026). 404 Media on Flock Nova, 14 May 2025. HaveIBeenFlocked.com, launch reporting January 2026 and site counts September 2026. Delvepoint Vehicle Sightings product page (15 billion sightings, 220 million monthly). Thomson Reuters CLEAR corporate-security marketing (20 billion commercial LPR scans). ACLU on non-Flock ALPR vendors, 25 August 2026. Reporting on the Sedgwick, Kansas chief (August 2024), the Kentucky officer arrest (CNN, 26 August 2026), and Flock's 100,000-camera mark and municipal cancellations (June 2026).

Scope note: reseller prices are drawn from 2026 price lists collected in OIQ vendor mapping and were not re-quoted at reissue; scan counts are vendor-reported. The 43-firm and 13-seller counts are OIQ research. The 700,000 sworn-officer figure is the Bureau of Justice Statistics order of magnitude. This is intelligence analysis, not legal advice.

OBSCUREIQ INTERNAL ANALYSIS // ARCHIVE COMM-040-ALPR-2026Q2 // XREF [CB-073](#) [CB-120](#) [CB-111](#) // ACCESS PUBLIC · PUBLIC-INTEREST RELEASE · REVISED 10 SEP 2026