

NYPD flouts law requiring disclosure of surveillance technology, according to advocates

August 11 2021, by Ebenezer Samuel



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The NYPD is not revealing enough information about how it's spending tax dollars on surveillance technology, two advocacy groups say.

The Surveillance Technology Oversight Project (STOP) and the Legal Aid Society obtained paperwork on five NYPD contracts for [surveillance technology](#) worth \$15 million over the past eight years. The documents, which the groups received through a Freedom of Information Law request, is heavily redacted.

That flouts the Public Oversight of Surveillance Technology Act, which the City Council passed last year, the advocates say. The new law mandated the NYPD reveal surveillance-related expenses, how it uses the technology to keep watch on New Yorkers and how it protects the information collected.

The contracts and related expenses had previously been exempt from [public disclosure](#) and were classified as "special expenses" in the NYPD's budget.

The contracts do reveal the companies providing the NYPD with cutting-edge technology. Morpho Trak, which specializes in biometrics—such as [facial recognition](#) and iris scanning—has an \$11.4 million deal with the NYPD.

The Harris Corp. has a two-year, \$1.2 million contract with the NYPD for Stingrays, which give precise locations of cell phones. The contract was signed in 2013.

The NYPD noted Monday that the contracts obtained by STOP and Legal Aid were released before the Public Oversight of Surveillance Technology Act went into effect and that it is in compliance with the new law.

The Police Department also invoked the upcoming 20-year anniversary of 9/11, saying the department "will remain forever vigilant in leveraging the most current technologies and public safety tools to keep this city

and its inhabitants safe from danger."

But Albert Cahn, STOP's executive director, said the police are fearmongering.

"The NYPD has been saying the sky is falling for years," Cahn said. "We've seen laws in other cities around the country that go much further, that require details of every vendor being used, and those cities are just as safe today."

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Citation: NYPD flouts law requiring disclosure of surveillance technology, according to advocates (2021, August 11) retrieved 16 April 2024 from <https://techxplore.com/news/2021-08-nypd-flouts-law-requiring-disclosure.html>

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