



New York City Comptroller
John C. Liu

NEWS RELEASE

PR13-08-168
Contact: Press Office, (212) 669-3747

August 28, 2013
Page(s): 2

LIU: REPORT OF NYPD MOSQUE SURVEILLANCE IS OUTRAGEOUS ABUSE OF CIVIL RIGHTS

Announces Audit to Determine Whether NYPD’s 3,000-Camera Domain Awareness System Has Safeguards Against Abuse

NEW YORK, N.Y. – City Comptroller John C. Liu today expressed outrage over the Associated Press report that the NYPD, without evidence, has labeled some City mosques terrorist organizations in order to use undercover informants to record sermons and conduct surveillance of imams. Liu also announced that, last week, his office engaged an audit of the NYPD Citywide system of surveillance cameras:

“This latest A.P. report details new heights of disregard for civil and religious freedoms by the Bloomberg Administration. Putting religious worship and religious leaders under surveillance, without evidence, is an outrageous betrayal of one of our country’s founding principles. It is unconscionable that the City spy on people simply because of where they study or worship or what neighborhood they live in.”

The A.P. report comes one week after Comptroller Liu launched an audit of the NYPD’s Domain Awareness System (DAS) of 3,000 cameras in order to ensure that this surveillance was protected against abuse or misuse.

“According to the NYPD’s own guidelines, no one should be stopped or spied upon by the police because of the color of their skin or their religious beliefs. That’s why we’ve launched the first-ever audit of the NYPD’s surveillance program. We’re going to determine if this technology, which allows the police to watch almost every move New Yorkers make, is safeguarded from abuse or misuse by those entrusted to control it. Does the NYPD have procedures in place to ensure against unconstitutional profiling? How do we know that this system isn’t abused by individuals for criminal purposes, such as stalking? Who is watching the watchers? This audit will help New Yorkers better understand how surveillance works in their City.”

Since the 9/11 attacks, the NYPD has created the largest and most sophisticated surveillance program in the country. The DAS is the NYPD’s Citywide system of 3,000 surveillance cameras that was initially a purely counter-terrorism system focused in Lower Manhattan.

The system has since expanded Citywide and now includes both NYPD and private security cameras and license-plate readers, which allow the police to track the movements of a person or a vehicle around the City for weeks at a time. The NYPD is engaged in a pilot program to give

precincts, and ultimately patrol officers, access to the Domain Awareness System to monitor local streets for potential criminals.

DAS Guidelines

The 2009 guidelines for the DAS state that:

“As with all NYPD operations, no person will be targeted or monitored by the Domain Awareness System solely because of actual or perceived race, color, religion or creed, age, national origin, alienage, citizenship status, gender (including gender identity), sexual orientation, disability, marital status, partnership status, military status, or political affiliation or beliefs.

“The Domain Awareness System will be used only to monitor public areas and public activities where no legally protected reasonable expectation of privacy exists.”

Concerns

The program does not have an outside monitor and it remains unclear whether it has ever been subjected to any internal audit to ensure access is protected and that it is not vulnerable to abuse or misuse.

“We don’t know what we will find out about how the NYPD operates DAS until the audit concludes, but it is our City Charter-mandated job to ask questions and demand answers,” Comptroller Liu said.

Watch video of Comptroller Liu’s announcement:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8GUNFLTwiuE&feature=c4-overview&list=UUFh0WLPZnTgW4efYnQZYIow>

Background:

<http://bigstory.ap.org/article/nypd-designates-mosques-terrorism-organizations>
<http://www.policeone.com/police-products/investigation/video-surveillance/articles/5993550-NYPDs-new-surveillance-system-Multifaceted-protection-or-a-little-Orwellian/>
<http://nymag.com/news/features/nypd-demographics-unit-2013-9/>
<http://articles.latimes.com/2013/jun/19/nation/la-na-nn-nypd-muslims-20130618>

*Visit www.comptroller.nyc.gov for the latest news, events, and initiatives.
Follow Comptroller Liu on [Twitter](#). To receive Twitter updates via text message,
text “follow johncliu” to 40404.
View the latest Comptroller’s office videos on [YouTube](#).*

###