

MAGNET S2

INTELLIGENCE REPORT

DTG: 260720-2000Z | Geographic Focus: Continental United States (Nationwide)

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REPORT IDENTIFICATION

Subject	Flock Safety Nationwide ALPR Expansion and Correlated Digital Footprint Exposure Risk to MAGNET Personnel
Purpose	Provide intelligence assessment of the nationwide Flock Safety ALPR camera network and associated data-sharing risk, and issue standing MAGNET-wide digital footprint reduction guidance to mitigate correlated location and identity exposure.
DTG	260720-2000Z
Reporting Period	2017 – 20 July 2026 (program trend); January – July 2026 (current reporting period)
Geographic Focus	Continental United States (Nationwide)
Precedence	RR -- ROUTINE
MagCon Status	3 -- ELEVATED (NO CHANGE)
Sources	Multiple source reporting from Local, National, and International platforms. See source list.

SUMMARY (BLUF)

Flock Safety's automated license plate recognition (ALPR) network has surpassed 100,000 camera devices across all 50 states, performing more than 20 billion vehicle scans per month across more than 5,000 communities and roughly 4,500 law enforcement agencies as of late June 2026.

Investigative reporting in 2025-2026 has documented Flock camera systems exposed to the open internet, unauthorized routing of locally collected plate data to federal and immigration enforcement agencies without originating-agency authorization, and individual officer misuse of the system to track private individuals.

Public backlash is accelerating: 82 Flock contracts have been canceled across 28 states since 2021, with 39 of those cancellations occurring in the first five months of 2026 alone, and Amazon-owned Ring has ended its data-sharing relationship with the company.

ALPR exposure is only one layer of a broader, mutually reinforcing tracking ecosystem; default-configured smartphones, mobile payment platforms, and login-based navigation applications independently generate location, purchase, and account-linked data capable of corroborating or extending vehicle-based ALPR tracking. This report recommends standing, MAGNET-wide adoption of baseline digital footprint reduction practices regardless of ALPR exposure in a given operating area.

BACKGROUND

Flock Safety was founded in 2017 in Atlanta and has grown into the dominant provider of ALPR technology in the United States, selling a security-as-a-service model to law enforcement agencies, homeowners associations, and private businesses. The company's stated goal is nationwide expansion to 'every city in the United States,' and its cameras integrate with state police watchlists and the FBI's National Crime Information Center (NCIC).

Independent of ALPR, U.S. smartphone users are, by default, continuously reporting location data to Google and/or Apple through platform-level location services, account sign-ins, mobile payment features (Google Pay/Apple Pay), and mapping applications that require an authenticated account to function fully. This creates a second, independently operating tracking layer that does not require ALPR camera coverage to generate a location and movement history tied to a real identity.

SITUATION

Scale of the Nationwide ALPR Network

The ACLU estimates 80,000 to 100,000 Flock devices are currently installed nationwide, conducting more than 20 billion scans per month; Flock's own reporting and independent, crowdsourced tracking from anti-surveillance organizations both place the total at over 100,000 devices across all 50 states as of mid-2026. More than 5,000 law enforcement agencies reportedly use the cameras, and some agencies do not publicly disclose camera locations.

Federal and Cross-Jurisdictional Data Access

Reporting indicates Flock's network has routed locally collected plate data to ICE and other federal agencies without cities' authorization, triggering at least 53 contract cancellations. In Evanston, Illinois, cameras the city ordered removed after canceling its contract were later found reinstalled without permission; full removal was not completed until early 2026. In Oxnard, California, a vendor-side issue silently re-enabled nationwide query access despite the city's system being configured for 'California only' searches, prompting the city to suspend its program entirely.

Internal documents and communications reviewed by 404 Media in 2025 describe a Flock product internally called Nova, characterized as a tool intended to connect Flock's plate data with commercial data-broker, people-lookup services — a potential further expansion of data linkage beyond core ALPR functions.

Security Vulnerabilities

Independent researcher Benn Jordan identified at least 70 Flock cameras exposed to the open internet in December 2025, allowing unauthenticated viewing of live camera feeds, including footage of children in parks and private moments in residential areas. With physical access, researchers demonstrated the ability to gain root access to camera hardware. Flock's public response characterized the researchers as anti-police activists rather than substantively addressing the vulnerabilities.

Officer Misuse of System Access

404 Media has reported that law enforcement officers have used Flock's search tools dozens of times to track ex-partners and other private individuals outside of authorized investigative purposes. Affected individuals have in some cases only learned of this activity after searching their own plate using a third-party tool called HavelBeenFlocked.

Contract Cancellation Trend

According to the public information project Ban Flock Cameras, 82 Flock contracts were terminated across 28 states between August 2021 and May 2026, with 39 of those cancellations occurring in just the first five months of 2026. Amazon-owned Ring announced earlier in 2026 that it would discontinue its business relationship with Flock.

COMMENTS / ASSESSMENT

Layered Tracking Risk

ALPR captures vehicle movement at fixed geographic points and is unavoidable by route awareness alone in covered corridors. Smartphone location services, mobile payment activity, and account-linked navigation applications independently generate a parallel, often more granular, movement and identity record that is not mitigated by avoiding ALPR-covered routes.

Correlation Risk

A vehicle logged by ALPR combined with a smartphone's Google or Apple account activity at the same approximate time and location creates a substantially higher-confidence identity-to-location link than either data source alone provides. Reducing exposure in only one channel (e.g., avoiding known camera locations) does not meaningfully reduce total exposure if the second channel (default smartphone configuration) remains unaddressed.

Assessment

Current reporting supports treating the nationwide ALPR network and default smartphone tracking behavior as two mutually reinforcing, independently operating exposure vectors, both of which are actively expanding in scale and data-sharing scope as of this reporting period.

Camera Effectiveness vs. Community Trust-Building: Comparative Evidence

This comparative evidence bears directly on the nationwide contract-cancellation trend and ongoing municipal decisions to expand, replace, or discontinue ALPR programs.

Independent, non-vendor-funded evaluations of ALPR effectiveness remain limited and produce more mixed findings than vendor marketing suggests. The most rigorous controlled study of ALPR-focused deterrence, a randomized controlled trial conducted by the Police Executive Research Forum in Mesa, Arizona, found that LPR use in auto-theft hot spots did not appear to reduce that crime type. A subsequent National Institute of Justice quasi-randomized patrol study similarly found LPR use increased stolen-vehicle recoveries but did not reduce the likelihood of a new crime call while an officer was present, providing little clear evidence of general crime-prevention efficacy. A 2025 evaluation of a major ALPR expansion in Atlantic City, NJ produced mixed, model-dependent results, with some statistical models predicting crime increases associated with the intervention.

Broader closed-circuit television research is more consistent but still modest in scale. The most recent 40-year, 80-study Campbell Collaboration meta-analysis found CCTV associated with a significant but modest 16 percent overall crime reduction, driven heavily by a 51 percent reduction in parking-lot settings specifically, with substantially smaller effects in other settings; CCTV performed best when combined with other interventions rather than deployed as a standalone measure.

Community trust-building and procedural-justice-based policing show a different effect profile: smaller direct effects on crime, but stronger, more mechanistically established effects on citizen cooperation. A meta-analysis of community

policing found limited direct effects on crime and fear of crime, but found community policing increases trust and satisfaction with police, which in turn increases citizens' willingness to report crime — a 'reporting effect' not driven by underlying crime-rate change. A dedicated meta-analysis of Tyler's procedural-justice model found consistent support that citizens who perceive police treatment as fair are more likely to view police as legitimate, and that perceived legitimacy predicts greater citizen cooperation and crime reporting; the same body of research finds that communities with low reporting rates nearly always have higher crime rates, while individuals who report victimization are less likely to be revictimized than those who do not report. A separate Campbell Collaboration review found community and problem-solving policing interventions produced the strongest crime-reduction effect sizes among disorder-policing strategies, while aggressive order-maintenance tactics generated no significant reduction.

Independent research on both interventions points to modest, narrowly-scoped direct effects rather than the broad reductions claimed in vendor-produced studies such as Flock Safety's self-reported customer survey claiming approximately 700,000 crimes solved annually nationwide. Camera systems appear to provide stronger investigative/case-clearance value than proven deterrence value, while trust-building interventions appear to strengthen the citizen-reporting pipeline that camera and other investigative data depend on to become clearance outcomes. This suggests camera expansion and trust-building investment function as complements rather than substitutes, and jurisdictions nationwide that expand ALPR infrastructure without maintaining or improving community trust may realize a smaller share of total crime-clearance benefit than camera count alone would suggest.

ASSESSMENT CATEGORY	PROBABILITY
Continued Nationwide ALPR Network Growth (12 mo.)	HIGH
Additional Confirmed Unauthorized Federal/ICE Data-Sharing Incidents	MODERATE-HIGH
Meaningful Federal ALPR Privacy Legislation Enacted (12 mo.)	LOW
Continued Local Contract Cancellation Trend	HIGH
Default-Configured Smartphone Activity Independently Corroborating ALPR-Logged Movement	HIGH

Note: HIGH probability ratings for both network growth and cancellation trend reflect two active, opposing forces (continued expansion vs. accelerating local backlash) that are simultaneously true based on current reporting, not a single unified trajectory.

INTELLIGENCE GAPS

- What proportion of MAGNET member travel corridors nationwide are covered by confirmed ALPR camera locations per DeFlock or agency transparency portals?
- Which federal agencies, beyond ICE, have received Flock-routed plate data without originating-agency authorization, and through what mechanism?
- Is the Nova commercial data-broker integration operational nationwide, or limited to pilot markets, and what data fields does it expose?
- What proportion of MAGNET members currently operate default-configured (non-de-googled/de-Apple) mobile devices, and what is the practical adoption barrier to migration?
- Has any agency nationwide commissioned an independent (non-vendor-funded) evaluation of ALPR crime-reduction or clearance-rate impact comparable in rigor to the Mesa, AZ PERF randomized controlled trial, and if so, what proportion replicate or contradict that trial's null finding?
- Does Magic Earth or comparable offline-capable navigation tools retain any server-side query logs even without an account login, and if so, under what retention policy?

MITIGATION RECOMMENDATIONS

- Reduce overall digital footprint, including migrating primary mobile devices used for MAGNET-related activity to de-googled builds (e.g., GrapheneOS-class operating systems) that do not run default Google Mobile Services, or equivalent de-Apple configurations, to limit continuous background location reporting to platform infrastructure.
- Do not use cell phones for purchases, including tap-to-pay/mobile wallet transactions. Mobile payment activity exposes real-time location and can be correlated to any Google or Apple account signed in on the device, regardless of whether that account is the one used for the transaction.
- Use offline-capable, login-free navigation applications such as Magic Earth in place of Google Maps or Apple Maps. Magic Earth does not require an account login to operate, reducing the number of platforms that receive continuous route and destination data during MAGNET-related travel.
- Where feasible, disable or restrict background location permissions for all non-essential applications on devices used for MAGNET activity, and periodically audit which applications retain 'always allow' location access.

- Treat vehicle movement through ALPR-covered corridors as independently loggable regardless of phone configuration; digital footprint reduction should be treated as a complement to, not a substitute for, route awareness and DeFlock consultation.
- Continue monitoring public reporting on Flock's Nova product and federal data-sharing developments, and route any confirmed new access mechanism through S2 intake for MAGNET-wide notification.
- Note for reporting/analytical context: independent research indicates community trust-building and procedural-justice practices strengthen the citizen-reporting pipeline that camera and other investigative data depend on to become clearance outcomes, while rigorous, non-vendor-funded studies show ALPR deterrence effects alone remain modest and narrowly scoped; jurisdictions optimizing only for camera count may be capturing a smaller share of total crime-clearance benefit than camera expansion alone would suggest.

MAGNET GUIDANCE

The digital footprint reduction measures above are recommended as standing personal OPSEC practice for all MAGNET members nationwide, independent of current MagCon status, given the demonstrated scale, security vulnerabilities, and federal data-sharing risk associated with the nationwide ALPR network and default smartphone tracking behavior.

PACE tier: members should treat smartphone-based Primary and Alternate coordination methods (cellular calls, standard SMS, app-based location sharing) as inherently more exposed than MAGNET HF/NBEMS, JS8Call, and VarAC BBS channels. Where operational sensitivity is a factor, Contingency and Emergency tier radio-based coordination should be favored over cellular methods for movement coordination and check-ins.

Members are reminded that reducing digital footprint is a routine risk-mitigation practice, not an indicator of wrongdoing, and should be adopted as standard operating practice rather than reserved for elevated MagCon conditions.

SOURCE LIST

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- [2] [B2] **Tech Times** — Flock Safety crosses 100,000 cameras; 53 cities cancel over unauthorized federal data access. <https://www.techtimes.com/articles/319317/20260629/flock-safety-crosses-100000-cameras-53-cities-cancel-over-unauthorized-federal-data-access.htm>
- [3] [B2] **Truthout** — Nationwide resistance against Flock surveillance cameras gaining steam. <https://truthout.org/articles/the-nationwide-resistance-against-flock-surveillance-cameras-is-gaining-steam/>
- [4] [B2] **Common Dreams** — "Get the Flock Out": nationwide backlash grows against AI-powered surveillance tech. <https://www.commondreams.org/news/flock-camera-backlash>
- [5] [B2] **PBS NewsHour** — Police say Flock cameras help solve crimes, but critics call them an invasion of privacy. <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/police-say-flock-cameras-help-solve-crimes-but-critics-call-them-an-invasion-of-privacy>
- [6] [B2] **The Next Web** — Flock surveillance cameras are spreading across the US; security flaws and misuse documented. <https://thenextweb.com/news/flock-surveillance-cameras-spread-us>
- [7] [B2] **Engadget** — Flock cameras track more than your license plate, and they're spreading fast. <https://www.engadget.com/2203000/flock-cameras-recording-license-plate/>
- [8] [B2] **Malwarebytes** — The backlash against Flock cameras is spreading. <https://www.malwarebytes.com/blog/news/2026/07/the-backlash-against-flock-cameras-is-spreading>
- [9] [B2] **ACLU** — "Get the Flock Out" campaign — nationwide advocacy overview and contract cancellation tracking. <https://www.aclu.org/campaigns-initiatives/get-the-flock-out>
- [10] [A1] **Center for Evidence-Based Crime Policy (George Mason Univ.)** — Evidence-based policing brief on the PERF Mesa, AZ randomized controlled trial finding LPR use in auto-theft hot spots did not reduce that crime type. https://cebcp.org/wp-content/evidence-based-policing/LPR_FINAL.pdf
- [11] [A1] **National Institute of Justice** — Quasi-randomized test finding LPR use did not enhance initial or residual deterrent effects of police patrol. <https://nij.ojp.gov/library/publications/do-license-plate-readers-enhance-initial-and-residual-deterrent-effects-police>
- [12] [B2] **Justice Evaluation Journal (Taylor & Francis)** — 2025 evaluation of a major ALPR expansion in Atlantic City, NJ; mixed, model-dependent crime-impact findings. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/24751979.2025.2473363>
- [13] [A1] **Office of Justice Programs / Campbell Collaboration** — 40-year, 80-study systematic review and meta-analysis finding CCTV associated with a modest 16% overall crime reduction, concentrated in car parks. <https://www.ojp.gov/library/publications/cctv-surveillance-crime-prevention-40-year-systematic-review-meta-analysis>
- [14] [B2] **Journal of Community Safety and Well-Being** — Meta-analysis of community policing's impact on crime reduction; limited direct crime effect, but increased trust, satisfaction, and citizen reporting. <https://www.journalcswb.ca/index.php/cswb/article/download/244/722/3870>
- [15] [B2] **ScienceDirect (Journal of Criminal Justice)** — Meta-analysis testing Tyler's procedural-justice model; fair treatment perceptions predict police legitimacy, which predicts citizen cooperation and crime reporting. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0047235219300029>
- [16] [A1] **Office of Justice Programs / Campbell Collaboration** — Systematic review and meta-analysis finding community and problem-solving policing generate the strongest crime-reduction effect sizes among disorder-policing strategies. <https://www.ojp.gov/ncjrs/virtual-library/abstracts/can-policing-disorder-reduce-crime-systematic-review-and-meta>

[17] [C2] Flock Safety — Vendor-produced customer survey claiming approximately 700,000 crimes solved annually nationwide using Flock technology; self-selected sample, not independently peer-reviewed. <https://www.flocksafety.com/customers/how-many-crimes-do-automated-license-plate-readers-alprs-solve-anyway>

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