

by Ben Doernberg 3 hours ago

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U.S.

TrapWire: International Surveillance Coordination Network

New emails released by WikiLeaks indicate that TrapWire, a defense contractor owned and operated by ex-CIA operatives, sits at the heart of American intelligence. Everything from incidents on military base to calls to NYC's "See Something, Say Something" are routed through TrapWire.



Trapwire

15 hours ago

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UPDATE: [Some WikiLeaks documents](#) offline as of 8:30am, reportedly as a result of [ongoing denial of service attacks](#).



Yes, WikiLeaks revealed a whole bunch of documents on #Trapwire, no, you can't read them easily, because of the current DDOS attack.

WikiLeaks

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I. The Bottom Line: TrapWire's Role In International Intelligence Too Important To Stay Cloaked

According to [newly released WikiLeaks documents](#), shadowy private security company TrapWire has taken law enforcement information sharing to an unprecedented level while staying largely under the radar. After 9/11, when agencies failed to "connect the dots" to prevent the World Trade Center attacks, it was common knowledge that coordination between law enforcement agencies became a priority. What has not been clear until now is that a private company run by ex-CIA operatives is at the heart of it.

Many cities encourage citizens to call and report suspicious persons and activity; what callers may not know is that if they live in New York, Las Vegas, DC, or Los Angeles (video below), their call is processed by a private company (TrapWire), and then forwarded to a national database accessed by the FBI and Department of Homeland Security if analysts believe it to be necessary. The same goes for "suspicious activity reports" generated by surveillance cameras integrated with TrapWire's threat detection software, such as in 500 locations in the New York Subway system.



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TrapWire is also noteworthy because it maintains a centralized database of all these reports submitted by citizens or TrapWire-enabled CCTV cameras. TrapWire not only collects these reports but cross references them across geographic and territorial boundaries; for instance, a report from the London Stock Exchange might be cross referenced with a report from the LAPD, or a citizen's phone call in Washington, DC. That an intelligence network connecting private businesses, military bases, civilian police, and federal agencies has managed to escape attention for so long is surprising, to say the least.

Finally, TrapWire is raising concerns because of its close ties to the CIA. Its CEO, President, and two of its top three managers are all ex-CIA, with more than 10 years experience each. The CIA is [generally](#) "prohibited from collecting intelligence concerning the domestic activities of U.S. citizens." While the emails released by WikiLeaks do not indicate that information obtained by TrapWire has been shared with the CIA, TrapWire's former parent company was involved with a number of CIA contracting operations, and it does not seem out of the realm of possibility that lines could become blurred, either because of personal ties or a seemingly imminent threat.

In any case, it seems clear that TrapWire's role in the US and international intelligence community bears scrutiny, scrutiny it has largely avoided until WikiLeaks' latest release.

II. Introduction

According to internal emails from global intelligence firm Stratfor obtained and newly released by WikiLeaks, TrapWire's surveillance analysis system seems to be near the center of the intelligence world. "[Designed to provide a simple yet powerful means of collecting and recording suspicious activity reports,](#)" it collects information from and shares information with local police departments, the Department of Homeland Security, the FBI, and in some cases private businesses such as Las Vegas casinos.

TrapWire, run by ex-CIA operatives, is a software program that seeks to prevent terrorist attacks by recognizing patterns in activity. The hope, [according](#) to Stratfor Vice President of Intelligence Fred Burton, is that, "a suspect conducting surveillance of the NYC subway can also be spotted by TrapWire conducting similar activity at the DC subway." There are at least 500 TrapWire-connected surveillance cameras in the New York subway system, according to [this blog post](#) by Mr. Burton.

It's in place at the White House and the London Stock Exchange. If you "see something, say something" in a New York subway, your "suspicious activity report" (SAR) goes through TrapWire. TrapWire is used by the DC Police, the LAPD, and the Las Vegas Police Department. It's in place at Fort Meade, and at over 60 Las Vegas casinos.

Suspicious activity reports (SAR's) generated by TrapWire systems are distributed to local law enforcement agencies, local partner corporations (in some circumstances), and to the local Department of Homeland Security (DHS) fusion center, as well as to a national database used by DHS fusion centers nationwide as well as the FBI.

According to [a leaked email from](#) TrapWire's Director of Business Development, all of the information provided by its corporate, national, and international clients "feed a centralized

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reports, the company has access to everything submitted by its partner law enforcement entities and reported by citizens.

TrapWire's goal: **when a casino camera spots something suspicious, or a Las Vegas resident 'sees something' and 'says something', that information is quickly in the hands of nearby resorts, the Las Vegas Police Department, DHS, and the FBI.** The TrapWire company itself also has access to all suspicious activity reports, whether they come from a New York City citizen's phone call or directly from the White House.

In a [2007 white paper](#), TrapWire says, "it does not capture, store, or share any sensitive or personally identifiable information." It is unclear how TrapWire defines sensitive information, as the company is unquestionably in control of an enormous amount of valuable intelligence data from around the world. **Given the extraordinarily close ties between the company, its employees, and the CIA, concerns about civil liberties implications of TrapWire's system and access seem well warranted.**

III. What Does TrapWire Do?

TrapWire has three distinct components:

1. **TrapWire Critical Infrastructure** is installed at sensitive locations, such as the White House and the London Stock Exchange, to analyze security footage to "[detect patterns of behavior indicative of pre-operational planning](#)." The software integrates with surveillance cameras "to capture photographs or video evidence of suspicious activity."
2. **TrapWire Community Member** [operates](#) New York's and Las Vegas' "See Something Say Something" campaigns, as well as the iWatch citizen reporting programs in DC and Los Angeles (promotional video below). Information obtained from citizen reports is compared to reports from other cities and analyzed, then forwarded to law enforcement and the local DHS fusion center.
3. **TrapWire Law Enforcement** provides coordination and information sharing for law enforcement agencies, including the sharing of information obtained through TrapWire's other two services. For instance, according to [Emergency Management Magazine](#), in Las Vegas TrapWire operates "a citywide database linking surveillance systems of most resorts and the fusion center

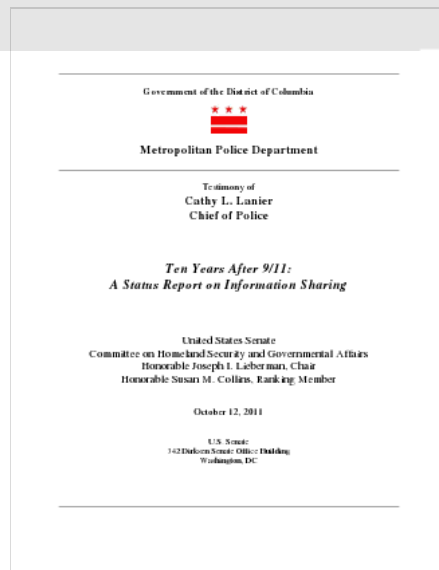
When a suspicious activity report (SAR) is made by a TrapWire system, for instance when a security camera spots something or a citizen makes a report on [iWatch.dc.gov](#), that information is meant to spread quickly. According to congressional testimony (below, p. 5) from DCPD chief Cathy Lanier, a DC TrapWire SAR is automatically forwarded to Washington's local Department of Homeland Security (DHS) fusion center, where it is analyzed. When DHS analysts verify that incidents "meet the established standards for suspicious activity reporting," they are added to a network accessible to all DHS fusion centers nationwide, and "are forwarded to the FBI's eGuardian system."

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IV. Who Uses TrapWire?

TrapWire does not make public a list of its clients. According to previously available information, clients include:

Transportation: ([Source](#)): Amtrak, Connecticut DOT, New Jersey Transit, MTA (New York City)

Military/Government: [Fort Meade](#), [US Marine Corps](#), [Department of Energy](#)

Law Enforcement: [DC Police](#), [Las Vegas Police Department](#), [NYPD](#), [LAPD](#)

iWatch/See Something, Say Something Programs: [US Army](#), [Los Angeles](#), [DC](#), [New York City](#), [Las Vegas](#)

Private Corporations: [14 hotels and casinos](#)

According to the Stratfor emails released by WikiLeaks, other clients include:

[The White House](#), [#10 Downing Street \(the UK Prime Minister's residence\)](#), [Scotland Yard](#),

[The London Stock Exchange](#), and the Texas Department of Public Safety.

V. Who/What Is TrapWire?

The founder of TrapWire is Richard (Hollis) Helms, former head of the CIA's [European](#) and [National Resources](#) Divisions (not the Richard Helms who served as Director of Central Intelligence from 1966–1973). TrapWire is [managed by ex-CIA operatives](#). President Dan Botsch spent 11 years as an intelligence officer, focusing on Russia and Eastern Europe. Director of Business Development Michael Maness was in the CIA for 20 years, where he did counterterrorism in the Middle East, Balkans, and Europe. Director of Operations Michael Chang "served as an Assistant Team Leader and Special Agent on the personal security detail of the Director and Deputy Director of Central Intelligence."

TrapWire was originally founded as part of the Abraxas Corporation, a security company which has since been [sold](#) to publicly traded defense company Cubic Corporation for \$124 million. [According to the LA Times](#), Abraxas was "tapped for unusual assignments", such as creating fake identities for CIA agents, "one of the most sensitive and carefully guarded operations in the CIA."

TrapWire was [spun out](#) as an independent company, Abraxas Applications, in 2007 (it changed its name to TrapWire, Inc. after the sale of the Abraxas Corporation).

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The leaked Stratfor emails also appear to detail a number of instances in which the lines between public service and private profit are blurred.

1. Stratfor Vice President for Intelligence Fred Burton



According to an August, 2009 [email](#) written by Stratfor President Don R. Kuykendall to CEO George Friedman, Stratfor had an arrangement to recommend TrapWire to its clients in exchange for 8% of any contract signed as a result as a finder's fee. **The partnership agreement is [here](#).** Mr. Kuykendall referred to TrapWire as, "one of Fred's pet companies."


Nine days before Mr. Burton began his term as Assistant-Director for Intelligence & Counter-Terrorism for the Texas Department of Public Safety, Mr. Kuykendall [wrote](#):

"Fred has said that, once he is #2 dude in the Texas DPS (September oneth) that he is going use the appropriated \$1,500,000 to install TrapWires product on the Texas border. George, 8% X \$1,500,000 = \$120,000 for the good guys."

It certainly appears that Stratfor's President believed that Mr. Burton planned to conduct his duties as a law enforcement officer for the financial benefit of the company. In a 2010 email, after Mr. Burton had left the Texas DPS and returned to Stratfor, Mr. Burton [wrote](#):


"As many of you old-timers know, we arranged to get a cut. I think the first dump is \$250,000 to Abraxas, with an annual renewal of \$150,000 per year for the TrapWire license. The point man for the project worked directly for me at DPS."

It appears the point person he is referring to is Blake Sawyer, a former Marines Captain and Deputy Assistant Director at DPS. In a 2010 [email chain](#), after Mr. Burton has already left the Texas DPS, Mr. Burton and Mr. Sawyer discuss Mr. Sawyer's recommendations to senior DPS officials, including Chief of Staff Robert Bodisch. Mr. Burton also [stated](#) that he "pushed the matter behind-the-scenes w/the Director and the DPS Commissioners."

 **Blake Sawyer** Out of your network
 Security Director
 Austin, Texas Area · Security and Investigations [Connect](#)
 302 connections · 1 recommendation

Current: Security Director at -
 Past: Deputy Assistant Director at Texas Department of Public Safety, Tactical Action Officer at Joint Interagency Task Force South, Captain at United States Marine Corps [less](#)

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2. TrapWire Senior Vice-President Joan McNamara, formerly

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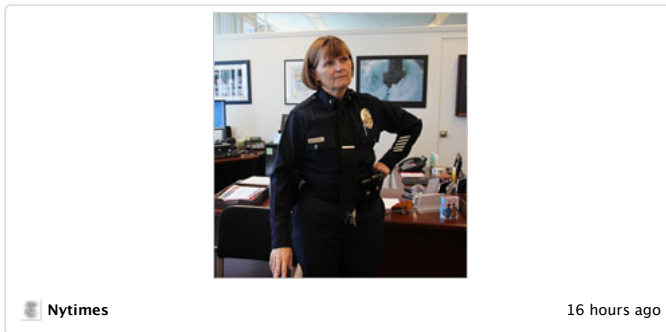


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In a 2010 [email](#) from Blake Sawyer, Commander McNamara is referred to as "a client and advocate of the system...**the driving force behind the SAR initiative being run with all the major city police chiefs and TRAPWIRE's role therein.**" According to a [Department of Justice report](#), Commander McNamara is identified as one of four commanders nationwide to have "volunteered to have their suspicious activity reporting processes assessed and used as the basis for developing the findings and recommendations." According to this [LAPD news release](#), TrapWire's iWatch "was developed under the direction of LAPD Commander Joan T. McNamara."

In other words, it appears that Commander McNamara was instrumental in securing the LAPD as a client for TrapWire, pushing other law enforcement agencies to adopt the LAPD's SAR reporting approach which included TrapWire, and then [went to work for TrapWire](#) (it is not clear if she is still with the company).



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