NEWS RELEASE

Unchecked Access To Private Data Doesn't Stop With Celebrities

Statement by Carol Rose, executive director of the ACLU of Massachusetts

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BOSTON -- "Reports in the Boston Globe and a state audit showing that police in Massachusetts are prying into personal information about movie stars and sports heroes by trolling the Criminal Offender Record Information (CORI) system are just the latest examples of what happens when we give government agencies unchecked power to collect and share personal data about private residents.

"The problem is, it doesn't stop with the stars.

"The misuse of law enforcement databases -- reported by the state auditor -- can have serious consequences for any of us. Unmonitored access gives power to government agencies to misuse information about ordinary people, not just celebrities and well-known public figures.

"Moreover, this danger does not stop at just the CORI records database. CORI is just one of many databases being built and operated by the Criminal History Systems Board and accessed at the so-called 'Commonwealth Fusion Center.' Other databases are being developed and rolled out at the Boston Regional Intelligence Center (BRIC) and through a combined local-FBI law enforcement hybrid known as the 'Joint Terrorism Task Force' (JTTF).

"The American Civil Liberties Union of Massachusetts applauds both the audit and the reporting that brought these abuses to light, and we call for further attention to this issue. Three key steps must be taken:

"1. Because of the power of these databases to affect people's lives, we must ensure that the information in them is accurate.

"2. Access must be individually authenticated and auditable so that any abuse can be traced.

"3. Abuses of access privileges must be met with real consequences."

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