



Jim Jordan Claims Government Improperly Tracks Americans' Financial Transactions

Sabrina Eaton
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WASHINGTON, D. C. - The day after the House Judiciary Committee he chairs released a report that claims federal law enforcement uses financial institutions to spy on Americans, U.S. Rep. Jim Jordan of Ohio conducted a hearing to air those allegations.

“The federal government is building profiles on the American people, and the profile isn’t based on criminal conduct, it’s based on political beliefs,” Jordan said to kick off a hearing of his Select Subcommittee on the Weaponization of the Federal Government. “And if you got the wrong political beliefs, well, you’re potentially a domestic violent extremist.”

Jordan’s report says law enforcement agencies and private institutions began sharing intelligence products after the January 6 attack on the U.S. Capitol through a web portal run by the Domestic Security Alliance Council (DSAC), a public-private partnership that facilitates exchange of security and intelligence information between the federal government and the private sector.

The report says some of the nation’s largest financial institutions participated in the exchange, and their tactics included keyword filtering of transactions, targeting terms like “MAGA” and “TRUMP,” as well as purchases of books, religious texts, firearms-related items, and recreational stores, like Cabela’s, Bass Pro Shop, and Dick’s Sporting Goods. It said the surveillance extended beyond criminal suspicion, likely encompassing millions of Americans with conservative viewpoints or Second Amendment interests.

“This is scary where things are headed,” said Jordan. “All this being done with no process, no warrant, no notification to the customer that the banks are actually supposed to serve ... Big government shouldn’t be working with big banks to target Americans for behavior that is legal and constitutional.”

The committee’s top Democrat, Stacey Plaskett of the Virgin Islands, accused Jordan of withholding information from his report.

She said that an effort to prevent a reprise of the Jan. 6 attack during President Joe Biden’s inauguration day, the Federal Bureau of Investigation sought financial records of people who fit three categories: they were in the Washington, D.C., area on January 6, they’d bought a

firearm in the past six months, and there was evidence they were returning for the inauguration.

“When it’s people who fit your political agenda, they’re not criminals anymore?” she asked “They’re patriots, they’re victims. They’re not, they’re criminals. And a jury of their peers found that when so many of them have been prosecuted in our court of law.”

Plaskett said it was appropriate for the FBI to seek bank records because it was conducting a criminal investigation, and a warrant wasn’t necessarily needed. She said everyone who opens a bank account is told when they open it that their information may be disclosed to law enforcement.

Witnesses at the hearing urged Congress to mandate greater transparency, examine the current system, and initiate reforms as appropriate to preserve legitimate law enforcement capabilities within the limits of meaningful privacy protections.

Norbert J. Michel of the libertarian Cato Institute think tank, suggested Congress should reform the Bank Secrecy Act to ensure that government can only access customers’ personal information with a valid search warrant.

“While sharing information on consumers may, at times, be useful to law enforcement, it also poses serious risks of abuse and excessive intrusion into the private lives of Americans,” said Brian Knight, a senior research fellow at the Mercatus Center at George Mason University. “This country was founded on the notion that the government should not have a general warrant to surveil its citizens, and that even the legitimate needs of law enforcement must be balanced against, and often subsumed by, the need to protect reasonable privacy.”