



## **‘Like Something From a Third-World Country’: Database Maintained by Military Collects Info as Minor as a Parking Ticket**

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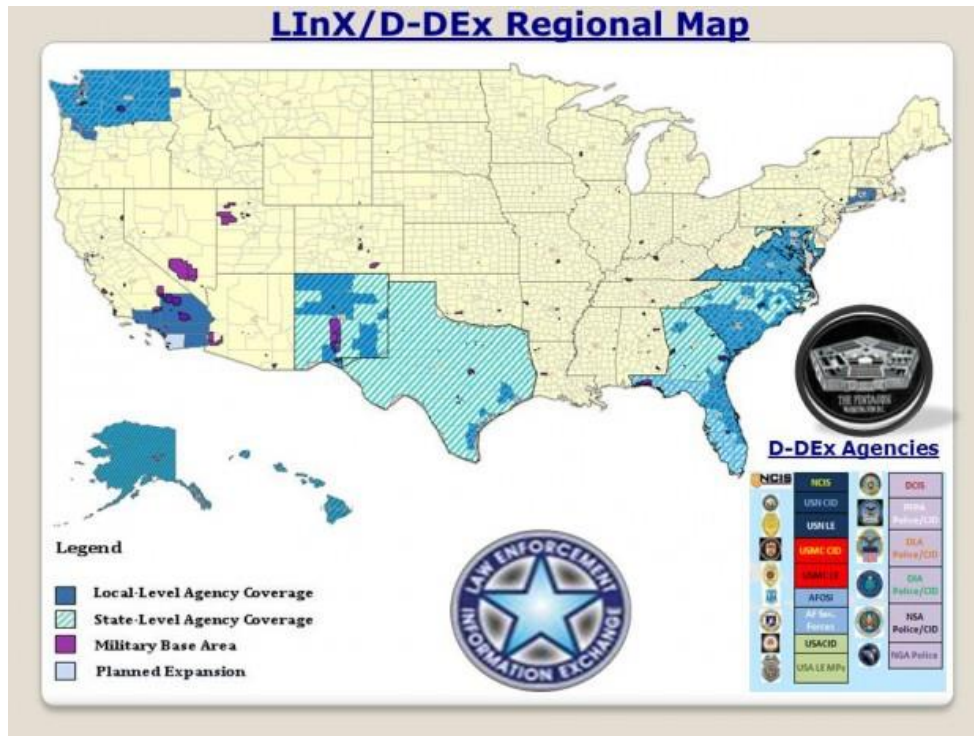
The past year has been riddled with concerns over domestic spying by government powers, especially in light of the [revelations of the activities by the National Security Agency](#), but a new report has looked into a not-so-secretive database and found the military collects information as minor as a parking ticket.

“It gives me the willies,” Eugene Fidell, a military law professor at Yale Law School, [told the Washington Examiner](#).

Fidell was asked by the newspaper to examine the Navy’s Law Enforcement Information Exchange, known as LInX, which has 506.3 million records and is run by the Naval Criminal Investigative Service.

“Clearly, it cannot be right that any part of the Navy is collecting traffic citation information,” Fidell told the Examiner. “This sounds like something from a third-world country, where you have powerful military intelligence watching everybody.”

LInX, according to the [Navy’s website](#), was launched in 2003 as a collaborative information sharing initiative between local, state and federal law enforcement. It currently contains data from 1,300 law enforcement sources and has an agreement with the FBI’s National Data Exchange, which gives it access to data from more than 4,000 sources.



*This map depicts where information is shared with the Navy’s LInX based on areas of “strategic importance to the Department of the Navy.” (Image source: NCIS/Navy)*

“LInX provides participating law enforcement partner agencies with secure access to regional crime and incident data and the tools needed to process it, enabling investigators to search across jurisdictional boundaries to help solve crimes and resolve suspicious events,” the website states. “LInX is designed to facilitate cooperation and sharing. Ownership and control of the data remains with the agency that provided it.”

According to a [fact sheet](#) about the database by defense contractor Northrup Grumman, LInX operates in 11 regions and uses “legally sharable structured and unstructured data.” Information can only be used for law enforcement activities.

“Having current information available at the street level has enhanced officer safety and the ability to solve crime, fight terrorism and protect strategic assets,” Northrup Gumman’s fact sheet stated. “The ability to instantly retrieve relevant data on people with whom the officer is in contact or is about to contact — data contributed by other law enforcement professionals who have histories with the subject — is making our law enforcement environment safer each day. Tactics and strategies can be developed and approached from a position of greatly improved knowledge of the subjects, their potential locations, associates, vehicles and past habits.”

According to the Washington Examiner, [information included in the database depends](#) on what law enforcement agencies contribute to it. Information can range from criminal histories to dispatch logs to minor traffic violations. Background checks for gun sales and concealed carry

permits are not included in the database. By contributing information to LInX, agencies and departments receive access to its stores.

The Examiner reported that it is unclear why LInX was placed under the Navy's jurisdiction and noted Fidell said the fact that a military branch maintains a catch-all database might concern some.

“The history of these programs is that they tend to metastasize and that there is mission creep that involves gathering far more information than is needed,” Gene Healy, vice president of the libertarian Cato Institute, told the Examiner. “In general, what you see in these programs is they start out very narrow and they expand beyond the limits of their original logic. Repeatedly throughout American history, what starts small becomes [larger, more intrusive](#), more troubling.”

Chris Calabrese, legal counsel for the American Civil Liberties Union, added that though “we live now in a world of records where everything we do is generating a record,” the standard should not be “we have to keep it all because it might be useful for something some day.