



ACLU, CMPD discuss 'The State of Surveillance' in Charlotte

May 30, 2013

By: Bora Kim

CHARLOTTE, N. C. -- The ACLU has been seeking information from the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department since it installed cameras in Uptown to secure the area before the Democratic National Convention.

ACLU has maintained, with the technology constantly changing, and no laws in the books so far, it is difficult to regulate how such tools are being used.

Dick Hester is with the volunteer ACLU chapter in Charlotte.

NBC Charlotte is following this story and will have more for you tonight at 11

He says not everyone disagrees with the law enforcement use of security cameras. He does want police, however, to make it clear to the public how they're being used.

"What is being done with the information that is being gathered? How is our privacy being protected?" he said.

"We think it is necessary for the police department to protect public safety, but that always goes hand in hand with issue of accountability."

There are more than 600 cameras in Uptown. Some of the equipment gathered during the DNC has been reissued for installation in neighborhoods.

CMPD's communication center has the capability to access security feeds from local banks and buildings, like Time Warner Cable Arena. With talks of expanding the existing surveillance networks, many like Hester believe now is the time to get in on the conversation.

"The technology for surveillance is expanding exponentially. So our privacy is constantly being tested, constantly being pushed at. I think people need to know. They need to be informed," he said.

CMPD Attorney Mark Newbold will be among the panelists.

He says CMPD is currently operating within the law. Newbold says procedures are in place with the fourth amendment in mind. For instance, he says court-ordered search warrants are obtained before obtaining cell phone records, or tracking a potential suspect using a GPS.

He adds, it's not illegal to capture people on "public" sidewalks and that cameras are used as a more efficient way to monitor activity, than having officers patrol every corner.

According to Newbold, data from surveillance videos are kept for ten days, and information from license plate readers for 18 months.

Newbold believes the real concern is the gathering of data from various sources, and painting a picture by applying what many know as the "Mosaic Theory."

"When you begin to link data up of things that occur in the public, where a car goes, where a person walks, those types of things-- some people say that's a different mosaic than the individual. The pieces themselves are not a problem, but when you put them together it is troubling for some," he said.

Sharon Bradford Franklin is among the three-person panel of experts. She is the senior counsel for The Constitution Project in Washington D.C. and instrumental in advising major cities, like D.C. on how to balance the need for surveillance, for an individual right to privacy.

View a cached version of this story [here](#).

View additional video coverage of this story [here](#).