BREAKING: ICE Illegally Swept Up Millions of Financial Records From Money Transfer Companies

Latest report reveals ICE used summon orders inappropriately to acquire data from money order companies, including Western Union, to gain information of over 6 million consumers

WASHINGTON – ICE has reportedly issued unlawful summon orders to gain access to personal data from money order companies since 2019, according to Senator Wyden’s (D-OR) office.

A recent inquiry made by Sen. Wyden’s office learned that Homeland Security Investigations (HSI), part of ICE, was helping to operate a surveillance program that swept up millions of financial records of those who used money transfer companies Western Union and Maxitransfers in Arizona, New Mexico, California, Texas, and Mexico. HSI accessed these transactions through a financial surveillance platform called Transaction Record Analysis Center (TRAC) set up by the Arizona Attorney General’s office in 2014.

In his letter to DHS Office of Inspector General (OIG), Senator Wyden is calling for an investigation into these unlawful practices where ICE used administrative subpoenas in order to acquire personal information, such as name, address, and date of birth from more than 6.2 million money order transactions between 2019 and 2022.

"It’s beyond disturbing that ICE has been using blanket subpoenas for so long to help create mass financial surveillance and continues to have access to this data," said Julie Mao, Deputy Director for Just Futures Law. "In fact, more than twenty companies are continuing to voluntarily share their data with the TRAC platform which can be accessed by ICE and hundreds of other law enforcement agencies. We call on ICE to end this arrangement and for elimination of all data from TRAC. This illustrates the dangerousness of ICE’s investment in
mass collection of data and their willingness to go to any length to acquire personal and sensitive data."

“Surveillance programs like these, just like other ICE programs that collect utility bill data or DMV information, chill immigrant communities by targeting essential services we cannot and should not do without,” said Jacinta Gonzalez, senior campaign organizer with Mijente. “Our electricity bills are collected, our phone records are collected, our car data is collected, and now we learn our money transfers are being collected. How can immigrants exist in American society if every institution they rely upon is feeding data back to those seeking to deport them?"

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Just Futures Law is a transformative legal organization that defends and builds the power of immigrants’ rights and criminal justice organizers and base-building community groups working to disrupt and dismantle our deportation and mass incarceration systems. Follow us @JustFuturesLaw.

Mijente Support Committee is a Latinx/Chicanx political, digital, and grassroots organizing hub. Launched in 2015, Mijente Support Committee seeks to strengthen and increase the participation of Latinx people in the broader movements for racial, economic, climate, and gender justice. Follow us @conmijente