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Flock Safety Overview

Company Background

Flock Safety is an Atlanta-based security technology company founded in 2017 by Garrett Langley and others [1] [2] . The company specializes in automated license plate recognition (ALPR) cameras and related surveillance software, along with video and gunshot detection systems [2] . Flock Safety has experienced rapid growth: by 2024 it operated in over 4,000 U.S. cities across 42 states [3] and raised around $380 million in venture funding (reaching a $3.5 billion valuation in 2022) [4] . Uniquely, Flock markets its services not only to law enforcement agencies but also to private clients such as homeowner associations (HOAs) and businesses, positioning its technology as a community crime-fighting tool [5] . Langley has described Flock's mission as creating a "public safety operating system" for neighborhoods, spurred in part by his own experience as a victim of a local break-in where traditional security provided little evidence [1] .

Services and Devices

A Flock Safety ALPR camera with an attached solar panel, mounted on a light pole. Flock Safety's core product is its network of ALPR cameras (branded models include the **Falcon** and **Sparrow**). These pole-mounted cameras photograph the rear of every vehicle that passes by and use artificial intelligence to read license plates and identify vehicle attributes like make, model, and color – a so-called "vehicle fingerprint" for each car [6] [7] . The images and data (timestamp and GPS location of each scan) are sent via cellular network to Flock's cloud servers, where they are stored in a searchable database [6] . The system automatically checks plate numbers against national and local crime databases (e.g. stolen vehicle hotlists or AMBER alerts) and can instantly notify nearby police if a match or "hit" is found [8] . Unlike traffic enforcement cameras, Flock's devices are used solely for investigative surveillance and do not issue tickets or enforce traffic laws [9] . Most Flock cameras are solar-powered and wirelessly connected, allowing quick installation on street poles or existing infrastructure without hardwired power [10] . In addition to ALPR cameras, Flock offers other public safety hardware: for example, the **Flock Raven** gunshot detection sensor (launched in 2021) which listens for gunfire and alerts police to its location, similar to ShotSpotter [11] . The company has also expanded into aerial surveillance – in late 2024 Flock acquired drone-maker Aerodrome to develop its own line of law enforcement drones [12] . Flock's software ecosystem enables integration of its data with other systems (including police dashcams and analytics platforms) and allows cross-agency data pooling for broader investigations [13] [14] .

Use Cases

Flock Safety's technology is used in a variety of security and law enforcement settings. **Police departments** deploy Flock ALPR cameras to generate leads and evidence for criminal investigations – for instance, to locate stolen vehicles, track wanted suspects, or find cars associated with AMBER Alerts [8] . When a Flock camera "hits" on a license plate that matches a crime database entry, it can alert officers in real time, aiding in suspect apprehension or recovery of stolen property [15] . Investigators can also query Flock's database after crimes occur, searching by plate number or vehicle characteristics to map where a suspect's car has

traveled. **Private communities and businesses** are another major customer base: homeowner associations, neighborhood watch groups, apartment complexes, and retail centers lease Flock cameras to monitor incoming traffic and deter property crimes like burglaries and package theft [16] [17] . These private deployments create a kind of "virtual gate" for neighborhoods or parking lots – residents or security teams can review footage of unfamiliar vehicles and even set up custom hotlists (e.g. to flag a car that was seen during a string of thefts) [17] . In many cases, private Flock systems share their data with local police, effectively extending law enforcement's surveillance network into those areas [18] . Flock Safety touts numerous success stories and claims its cameras have helped solve hundreds of serious crimes and recovered thousands of stolen vehicles nationwide [19] . As of 2024 the company even stated that its devices were involved in roughly 10% of all U.S. criminal investigations that year (a figure based on reports from its users) [20] , highlighting how ubiquitous the technology has rapidly become among law enforcement agencies.

Controversies and Privacy Concerns

Despite Flock's crime-fighting claims, the company has faced significant criticism over privacy, surveillance, and potential bias. Civil liberties groups describe Flock's system as **mass surveillance**, given that its cameras indiscriminately collect data on every vehicle that passes – not just suspects – creating a broad record of people's movements [21] [22] . The Electronic Frontier Foundation (EFF) warns that Flock's automated dragnet "collects information on everyone, regardless of whether they are connected to a crime," and notes it has even been *misused* by police officers to spy on personal acquaintances [23] . Concerns have been raised that such constant tracking of residents and visitors could chill free speech and other liberties; for example, ALPR data might be employed to monitor attendees at protests or those visiting sensitive locations like clinics [24] . The **American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU)** argued in a 2023 report that while limited use of license plate readers for legitimate purposes (like catching stolen cars or responding to Amber Alerts) can be acceptable, Flock's nationwide network is effectively creating "comprehensive records of everybody's comings and goings" – something the ACLU says government should not do without individualized suspicion [25] [26] . They also cautioned against disproportionate targeting, urging that ALPR devices not be concentrated in low-income or majority-minority neighborhoods (to avoid **racial profiling** or over-policing of those communities) [27] . Another controversy involves data security and sharing: Flock retains a massive volume of location data, and officials in some states have questioned "what is happening with that data, who is accessing it, [and] who is keeping it," warning that such unchecked surveillance could infringe on privacy rights [28] . In one instance, it came to light that Flock's database was queried for federal immigration enforcement purposes, prompting outrage from privacy advocates who fear the system could be used to target undocumented immigrants or enforce abortion bans by tracking drivers across jurisdictions [29] [30] . Overall, Flock Safety's approach has sparked an ongoing debate: supporters see a high-tech solution to crime, while critics worry it sacrifices privacy and civil liberties, essentially outsourcing public surveillance to a private company.

Recent Developments and Opposition (2024–2025)

In the past two years, Flock Safety's expansion has met growing legal and public pushback. In mid-2024, a Virginia circuit court judge ruled that the warrantless collection of drivers' location data via Flock cameras constitutes a **search** under the Fourth Amendment, and thus such evidence was inadmissible in court without a warrant [31] . Shortly after, the nonprofit Institute for Justice filed a federal lawsuit against the city of Norfolk's Flock camera network, arguing that its continuous scanning of license plates amounts to unconstitutional mass surveillance of citizens' movements [32] . Advocacy organizations have also ramped

up opposition: the EFF and grassroots groups are mobilizing against new Flock deployments in various cities. In San Diego, for example, a local alliance (the TRUST Coalition) has called on the city council to cancel its "dangerous and costly" ALPR program with Flock [33]. In Austin, Texas, community organizers achieved a notable victory in 2025 when they successfully pressured the city to terminate its Flock Safety contract, forcing the removal of all ALPR cameras from city streets [34]. Meanwhile, investigative reporting has continued to raise alarms about Flock's business practices. In May 2024, journalists revealed that Flock's data had been shared with federal agencies for immigration enforcement queries, apparently bypassing local policies that forbid such sharing [35] [29]. And in 2025, a **404 Media** report exposed a new Flock initiative code-named "**Nova**" – a data platform that combines Flock's license plate scans with information from data breaches, social media, and other public records to let police **track individuals in real time without a warrant** [36]. News of this expansive data-mining tool drew immediate condemnation from civil liberties advocates, who argued it exemplified the very creep of surveillance that privacy groups have long feared. In response to these developments, prominent watchdog organizations like the ACLU and EFF continue to advocate for stricter oversight or outright rejection of Flock's systems, urging communities to balance public safety goals with the protection of privacy and constitutional rights [37] [21].

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