

United States Senate

Andrew Jassy
Chief Executive Officer
Amazon.com, Inc.
410 Terry Avenue N.
Seattle, WA 98109

Dear Mr. Jassy:

I write to express concerns about Ring’s ongoing surveillance practices and engagement with law enforcement. While I acknowledge and appreciate steps Ring has taken in response to my previous letters to your company,¹ I remain troubled by your company’s invasive data collection and problematic engagement with police departments.

Recent research indicates that in addition to capturing troves of video recordings, Ring products also surveil the public by capturing vast amounts of audio recordings. Ring doorbells, for example, record both video and audio on and around your customers’ respective properties,² and according to Amazon’s Vice President of Public Policy Brian Huseman, “Ring does not ... verify compliance” with rules forbidding recordings beyond users’ properties.³ Recent research by Consumer Reports shows that Ring products are able to capture clear audio recordings up to 20 feet away from the devices.⁴

Since Ring has well over 10 million device users,⁵ it appears likely that Ring products record millions of Americans’ activity without their knowledge every day. This surveillance system threatens the public in ways that go far beyond abstract privacy invasion: individuals may use Ring devices’ audio recordings to facilitate blackmail, stalking, and other damaging practices. As Ring products capture significant amounts of audio on private and public property adjacent to dwellings with Ring doorbells—including recordings of conversations that people reasonably expect to be private—the public’s right to assemble, move, and converse without being tracked is at risk.

This sweeping data collection and invasive surveillance is particularly concerning in light of Ring’s ongoing engagement with law enforcement. To date, more than 2100 policing agencies

¹ See generally POLICING PROJECT, RING NEIGHBORS & NEIGHBORS PUBLIC SAFETY SERVICE: A CIVIL RIGHTS & CIVIL LIBERTIES AUDIT (2021); Letter from Edward J. Markey, U.S. Senator, to Jeffrey Bezos, Chief Exec. Officer, Amazon (Sept. 5, 2019); Letter from Edward J. Markey, U.S. Senator, to Jeffrey Bezos, Chief Exec. Officer, Amazon (Oct. 10, 2019).

² POLICING PROJECT, *supra* note 1, at 12.

³ Letter from Brian Huseman, Vice President, Pub. Pol’y, Amazon, to Edward J. Markey, U.S. Senator (Nov. 1, 2019).

⁴ See Yael Grauer, *Video Doorbell Cameras Record Audio, Too*. CONSUMER REP., Apr. 15, 2022.

⁵ POLICING PROJECT, *supra* note 2.

have apparently joined Neighbors Public Safety Service (NPSS),⁶ a platform on which participating police departments may request footage from Ring users. This represents a 500 percent increase in law enforcement engagement on your platform since I sent your company my 2019 letters on this topic.⁷ Notably, reports indicate that multiple police departments have attempted to bypass Ring’s video request process, including by gaining direct access to user footage in real time.⁸ Additionally, as experts point out, when law enforcement actors access Ring users’ video and audio footage, they circumvent key systems of public accountability. Ring enables police surveillance without public cost, debate, or approval.⁹ Once Ring provides users’ recordings to law enforcement, significant opportunities for data misuse emerge. In fact, according to Ring, when police departments access Ring device recordings, the company enforces no restrictions on what the department can do with downloaded footage.¹⁰

In light of these concerns, please respond in writing to the following questions by July 4, 2022:

1. To the best of Ring’s knowledge, how far away can Ring products capture audio?
2. Will Ring commit to eliminating Ring doorbells’ default setting of automatically recording audio when video is recorded? If no, why not?
3. Will Ring commit to never incorporating voice recognition technology into its products? If no, why not?
4. Will Ring commit to making end-to-end encryption of stored recordings the default option for users, so that Ring and Amazon do not have access to user videos? If no, why not?
5. Ring has committed to “try to onboard” non-law enforcement agencies onto the NPSS platform in order to combat over-policing.¹¹ Please detail how many of each of the following entities use NPSS:
 - a. Police departments
 - b. Fire departments
 - c. Public health agencies
 - d. Animal services
 - e. Agencies that primarily address homelessness, drug addiction, or mental health
 - f. Others (please specify)

⁶ RING, Active Agency Map, <https://support.ring.com/hc/en-us/articles/360035402811-Active-Agency-Map> (last updated June 2, 2022).

⁷ See Drew Harwell, *Doorbell-camera firm Ring has partnered with 400 police forces, extending surveillance concerns*, WASH. POST (Aug. 28, 2019).

⁸ See POLICING PROJECT, *supra* note 5, at 33.

⁹ *Id.* at 32.

¹⁰ See Letter from Brian Huseman, Vice President, Pub. Pol’y, Amazon, to Edward J. Markey, U.S. Senator (Sept. 26, 2019) (“Ring does not impose requirements beyond law enforcement’s own procedures”); see also POLICING PROJECT, *supra* note 8, at 21 (“Once a video is downloaded, it no longer is within Ring’s control.”).

¹¹ POLICING PROJECT, *supra* note 9, at 47.

6. Some police departments have reportedly circumvented Ring’s official processes to access users’ recordings.¹² What steps has Ring taken to ensure that police departments do not bypass Ring requirements by engaging directly with device users outside of NPSS?
7. Ring has stated that it will not share “customer information” with law enforcement absent consent, a warrant, or “an exigent or emergency” circumstance.¹³
 - a. Please explain in detail Ring’s specific internal policies regarding what constitutes an “exigent or emergency” circumstance.
 - b. How many times has Ring shared a user’s recordings with law enforcement because of an “exigent or emergency” circumstance?
8. Under the NPSS Terms of Service, Ring reserves the right to permanently ban a user or agency for conduct that is “inappropriate or harmful.”¹⁴ Please explain in detail Ring’s specific internal policies regarding what constitutes such “inappropriate or harmful” behavior, including what behavior would lead to suspension and what behavior would lead to a permanent ban.
9. Does Ring work to proactively ensure that users or agencies on NPSS abide by the NPSS Terms of Service? In particular, does Ring proactively review activity on NPSS to stop users from engaging in “inappropriate or harmful” conduct, “post[ing] deliberately false or misleading information,” and using anything other than their “real name, title, and agency contact information”?¹⁵ If yes, please explain how. If no, will Ring commit to developing such a process?
10. Ring has “placed a moratorium” on onboarding private policing agencies onto NPSS.¹⁶
 - a. Please identify all the private agencies currently on NPSS.
 - b. Will Ring commit to extending this “moratorium” into an indefinite ban on all private policing agencies from NPSS? If no, why not?
11. Ring has made updates to address concerns about privacy, bias, and over-policing.¹⁷ Will Ring commit to making the changes identified below permanent? If no, why not?
 - a. Never accept financial contributions from policing agencies;
 - b. Never provide contributions of financial value, including device donations and event invitations, to policing agencies;
 - c. Never allow immigration enforcement agencies to request Ring recordings;
 - d. Never allow federal law enforcement agencies to request Ring recordings;

¹² *See id.* at 33 (explaining that policing agencies have attempted to circumvent requirements by subsidizing Ring devices if users agree to submit all requested footage, loaning Ring devices to users and retaining ownership of footage, or enabling device owners to share their video streams live).

¹³ Letter from Brian Huseman to Edward J. Markey (Nov. 1, 2019), *supra* note 3.

¹⁴ Neighbors Public Safety Service: Terms of Service, <https://support.ring.com/hc/en-us/articles/360039678152-Neighbors-Public-Safety-Service-Terms-of-Service> (last visited June 6, 2022).

¹⁵ *Id.*

¹⁶ POLICING PROJECT, *supra* note 12, at 51.

¹⁷ *See id.* at 46-51.

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- e. Never allow Ring employees to bring incidents posted on the Neighbors App, the Ring social network platform, to law enforcement attention or encourage the same;
- f. Never participate in police sting operations;¹⁸
- g. Always uphold all other commitments enumerated in part IV of the Policing Project report.¹⁹

Thank you in advance for your attention to these requests.

Sincerely,



Edward J. Markey
United States Senator

¹⁸ For instance, reports indicate that Ring has previously partnered with law enforcement to equip fake Amazon packages with GPS trackers and surveil doorsteps with a Ring camera. *See* Caroline Haskins, *How Amazon and the Cops Set Up an Elaborate Sting Operation That Accomplished Nothing*, VICE NEWS (July 1, 2019).

¹⁹ *See* POLICING PROJECT, *supra* note 17.