Surveillance Impact Report
ARJIS
San Diego City Attorney's Office

DESCRIPTION:

The Automated Regional Justice Information System (ARJIS) is a complex criminal justice enterprise network used by law enforcement agencies throughout San Diego and Imperial Counties. It is managed through a Joint Powers Agency in which the City of San Diego is a member. ARJIS provides users with access to local criminal justice data, including warrants and jail booking photographs/information, crime and sex offender information, Department of Motor Vehicle (DMV) information, crime analysis and statistical reporting tools.

PURPOSE:

ARJIS is used by the Civil Divisions of the San Diego City Attorney's Office (SDCAO) to perform fact investigation for assigned cases in which the SDCAO is defending the city in civil litigation, to investigate fraud, consumer protection complaints, violations of the California Unfair Competition Law (UCL), building code violations, or substandard living conditions; to pursue a restraining order, or to secure firearm relinquishment. The use of ARJIS is an essential component of case investigation that both enhances and advances the investigative process; it is used extensively by sworn and non-sworn law enforcement, corrections, community corrections and regulatory employees throughout San Diego and Imperial Counties.

LOCATION:

ARJIS is used by the Civil Divisions of the SDCAO in cases where the City of San Diego is involved in civil litigation. ARJIS is accessed by SDCAO authorized employees via SDCAO computers, both in the SDCAO work site and remotely, with mandatory security protocols in place, such as a Virtual Private Network and Multi-Factor Authentication. The work sites of the SDCAO are in secure, access-controlled buildings. ARJIS is a web-based set of applications that must be accessed via a secure network connection.

IMPACT:

The SDCAO's ARJIS Surveillance Use Policy safeguards civil liberties and civil rights. ARJIS uses are not based on discriminatory or viewpoint-based factors. The SDCAO's use of surveillance technology is intended to support and benefit the City of San Diego while minimizing and mitigating potential impacts on community members' civil rights and civil liberties. It is used only in performing legal services for the City. The information provided by ARJIS is sourced from law enforcement records, some of which are public records and open-source information, but with additional details.

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MITIGATION:

The collection, use, retention, or dissemination of data shall not be used to violate the Constitutional rights of any person or be used in any manner that would discriminate against any person based upon their ethnicity, race, gender, national origin, religion, sexual orientation or gender identity. ARJIS provides efficient and time-saving access to law enforcement records, many of which are public records and/or open-source information, but with additional details. ARJIS does not utilize visual or audio recording capabilities or use facial recognition.

DATA TYPES AND SOURCES:

ARJIS provides Department members with information gathered from law enforcement records, some of which are public records and/or open-source information, but with additional details The SDCAO enters data into the Officer Notification System (ONS) on a limited basis for persons served Non-Compliance Orders for allegedly failing to relinquish firearms after being served a Domestic Violence Restraining Order or other restraining order. No other data is entered into ARJIS applications by the SDCAO. The SDCAO reviews information from other sources as outlined below.

Sources of information in ARJIS come from each of the local contributing police departments and sheriff in San Diego County, as well as Department of Motor Vehicle information and probation/parole information. Records are generally retained from six months to seven years, and the total set of data is referred to as the ARJIS Operational Store.

ARJIS also hosts an application called CrimeTracer by a vendor called SoundThinking. Its website indicates that it provides more than one billion Criminal Justice Information System (CJIS) compliant records from over 2,100 law enforcement agencies in the United States.

DATA SECURITY:

SDCAO computers require user login authentication and are situated in secure buildings with access control. When working remotely, authorized users are required to login via the SDCAO Virtual Private Network using a work computer and multi-factor authentication. Only authorized employees of the SDCAO shall access the data.

FISCAL COST:

The ARJIS subscription cost is billed quarterly, and Fiscal Year 2027 total annual costs are estimated at $85,000. This is paid through the SDCAO's general fund. Annual costs are billed

based on the number of users. The SDCAO is in the 50-99 user bracket with 76 users as of May 2026.

THIRD PARTY DEPENDENCE:

The SDCAO does not store data in ARJIS. ARJIS is managed by a Joint Powers Agency agreement comprised of law enforcement agencies in the San Diego County region; The San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) administers the ARJIS Division. ARJIS vendors retain a user's search terms and case reference for audit purposes. All data stored within the platform is restricted and only accessible to authorized persons. Information can be accessed by the SDCAO user and saved in secure network drives managed by the SDCAO. No data will be stored on City hardware or network drives unless downloaded from the web application for use in a qualifying investigation.

ALTERNATIVES:

There are no alternatives to using ARJIS. It is the designated application that receives local crime and arrest data from law enforcement agencies in the San Diego County region.

TRACK RECORD:

The SDCAO has used ARJIS applications successfully for more than ten years.

The SDCAO uses ARJIS multiple times each day to conduct authorized case investigations.

SDCAO staff report that ARJIS provides information about individuals involved in litigation handled by the SDCAO. ARJIS also aids in locating potential witnesses as it may provide address and telephone number information. ARJIS is critical in finding plaintiff and witness criminal backgrounds, especially in lawsuits alleging police use of force cases. In most cases, the plaintiffs do not provide a police report number connected to an incident so SDCAO staff must search for any available reports through ARJIS. Once a report is located for the alleged incident, SDCAO staff can obtain copies of the report(s) in order to prepare a competent and professional defense to the lawsuit.

SDCAO staff in the Gun Violence Reduction Unit used ARJIS' Officer Notification System (ONS) feature to provide a secure means of alerting local law enforcement about subjects who have been issued a Non-Compliance Order for failing to relinquishment firearms after being served a Domestic Violence Restraining Order or other restraining order. In one case, SDCAO staff were unable to locate an individual who had been served a DVRO and was reportedly in possession of a firearm. SDCAO staff collaborated with both San Diego Police Department officers and National City Police Department officers to attempt to locate the subject. Through the ONS application, the SDCAO received alert notifications when that

subject was contacted in San Diego and National City and then shared with those agencies that the subject was allegedly in possession of a firearm in violation of a court order.

In another situation, SDCAO staff received a call from a San Diego Sheriff's deputy regarding a subject who had also been served a DVRO and allegedly possessed a firearm. A Non-Compliance Order was issued on that subject and previous attempts by law enforcement to contact him regarding the alleged gun possession were unsuccessful. SDCAO staff were able to relay to the deputy that a gun was allegedly outstanding and learned that no gun was located during the subsequent contact, helping to ensure efforts had been taken to seize potentially Outstanding firearms due to the prohibiting order.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT AND COMMENTS:

On September 23, 2026, at 12:00 p.m., there was a publicly held meeting broadcast live and facilitated in person in all nine Council Districts in the City of San Diego. The following surveillance technologies were presented by the SDCAO:

1. Aggregate Public Records Search Systems
2. Automated Regional Justice Information Systems
3. Products Received from Law Enforcement
4. SDLaw
5. FinCEN Query

The SDCAO video recorded this meeting so that it could be presented to a larger group. The benefit of the video was the capability of translating the presentation into over 100 languages such as Spanish, and other languages frequently used by the communities within San Diego, to maximize penetration of the materials to affected groups. The link to the video (TRUST Community Meeting - City Attorney's Office) is at:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QOkigc7fNdw

There were eight attendees in San Diego City Council District 3. There were no attendees in any of the other districts.

There were six public comments and no questions out of the eight attendees. There were no comments submitted to the online public comment form.

Comment #1:

The speaker strongly opposed San Diego's continued use and funding of surveillance technologies such as ARJIS and ALPRs [Automated License Plate Recognition systems]. The speaker argued that these tools enable unrestricted data harvesting, violate civil rights, and were designed to circumvent protections rather than enhance safety. The speaker emphasized that surveillance and AI systems are inherently dangerous, cannot be responsibly regulated, and

disproportionately harm vulnerable communities, especially in the context of ICE actions. The speaker concluded by urging elected officials to address these concerns and reaffirmed that the community will continue holding leaders accountable.

Comment #2:

The speaker expressed concern that technological progress should serve the public, not powerful interests. The speaker highlighted a report showing thousands of ALPR search entries labeled only as "other," which the speaker argued enables misuse despite supposed safeguards. The speaker stated that ambiguous search categories and limited auditing allow systems like ARJIS to be abused by malicious actors. The speaker stressed that subjective assurances of ethical data practices are insufficient and called for an end to the city's use of these surveillance technologies.

Comment #3:

The speaker spoke about how surveillance technology contributes to systems of displacement. He criticized the meeting's timing and short notice as a form of manufactured consent that limits public participation. The speaker also warned against relying on arrest data, noting that many arrests are biased or unconstitutional and should not inform surveillance systems. The speaker raised concerns about offsite access to these tools through VPNs and underscored that both the technologies and the processes surrounding them are deeply problematic.

Comment #4:

The speaker argued that San Diego must rethink its approach to surveillance technology. The speaker described a pattern in which society embraces new technologies without understanding their long-term consequences, using smartphones as an example. The speaker noted that individuals can control their personal devices, but government surveillance systems offer no comparable control to the public. The speaker urged leaders to follow a "do no harm" principle when implementing advanced technologies and stressed the need for transparency under the Trust Ordinance. The speaker stated that while harms from ALPRs are already known, the community still lacks critical information about ARJIS and its use.

Comment #5:

The speaker expressed frustration that the city has not followed the processes outlined in the Trust Ordinance, despite its unanimous approval. The speaker said the annual report, which passed the Privacy Advisory Board, still has not been presented to the City Council, calling this a failure of accountability. The speaker noted that required use policies and reviews for existing technologies have not occurred and criticized the city for discussing even more powerful surveillance tools without adhering to proper procedures. The speaker voiced deep concern about the impact on communities already facing risks from ICE actions and stated that the city is not taking the issue seriously.

Comment #6:

The speaker raised concerns that new surveillance technologies consistently bypass the Privacy Advisory Board, undermining its role in ensuring transparency and accountability. The speaker warned that powerful entities, including large corporations and investors, may gain access to sensitive data, which could be exploited in harmful ways. Drawing comparisons to surveillance systems in other countries, the speaker cautioned that data could be weaponized to restrict essential services or freedoms. The speaker argued that the government's partnerships with wealthy corporations contradict claims of avoiding such alliances and urged the city to scrutinize where data is being sent and how it might be used.

At an evening meeting on September 24, 2026, at 5:30 p.m., the SDCAO re-broadcast the recorded video from September 23, 2026. The link to the video (TRUST Evening Community Meeting City Attorney's Office) is at: **https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M2uG7aHxfw0**

For the evening meeting, there were two attendees in San Diego City Council District 3 and four attendees virtually.

There were two public comments and no questions from the attendees. There were no comments or questions submitted to the online public comment form.

Comment #1:

The speaker expressed deep appreciation for meeting host and the City Attorney's Office for their presentation on surveillance technology. They describe feeling overwhelmed by the information but grateful for gaining a new awareness of privacy and surveillance. They now recognize that monitoring is constant once they leave their home and commit to being more alert while staying open to emerging technology. They closed by reaffirming their long-time support for the PAB [Privacy Advisory Board], expressing love for its work, and sharing excitement about attending an upcoming meeting.

Comment #2:

The speaker thanked the group for hosting the public forum and praised the presenter for balancing civil data collection topics with law enforcement considerations, such as "SARS" reporting and coordination with county sheriffs. The speaker raised concerns about data retention, referencing a state bill that would require judicial warrants for accessing personal data. The speaker questioned whether the standard of expunging data after 30 days is genuinely practiced and encouraged deeper discussion on both warrant requirements and long-term data retention in future PAB [Privacy Advisory Board] meetings.