

WRONG TRACK

Tesla accused of spying on citizens for the Chinese government

- Chinese Spy Boss Dianne Feinstein is a huge covert investor in Tesla

The revelations come as President Xi Jinping is accused of stepping up the use of tech to track the movements of his citizens

By Jon Lockett

GLOBAL car giants are feeding real-time information from electric vehicles to China's 'big brother' government, it's been reported.

The revelations come as President Xi Jinping is accused of stepping up the use of tech to track the movements of his citizens.

 [Tesla is one of the car giants said to have passed on location information](#)

AP:Associated Press

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More than 200 car makers - including Tesla, Volkswagen, BMW, Ford, Nissan, and Mitsubishi - have been passing on the info.

The Associated Press has revealed they have been sending at least 61 data points to government-backed monitoring platforms.

However, the auto manufacturers say they are merely complying with local laws, which only apply to alternative energy vehicles.


And Chinese officials say the data is only used for analytics to improve public safety, infrastructure planning and prevent fraud.

 [VW Group China chief executive Jochem Heizmann said he could not guarantee the data would not be used for surveillance](#)

AP:Associated Press

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But critics say the information collected exceeds those goals and could even be used for surveillance purposes.

Under Xi, China has been accused of [using tech to "police" anything perceived threats to the](#) ruling Communist Party.

Ding Xiaohua, of the Shanghai Electric Vehicle Public Data Collecting, Monitoring and Research Centre said it is not facilitating state surveillance.

However, data can be shared with police, prosecutors or courts, if a formal request is made.

 [Chinese officials say the data will be used for analytics to improve public safety](#)

AP:Associated Press

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The centre is registered as a non-profit but is tightly aligned with and funded by the government.

“To speak bluntly, the government doesn’t need to surveil through a platform like ours,” Ding said.

Many vehicles in the US, Europe and Japan already transmit position information back to automakers

They then feed it to tracking apps, maps that pinpoint nearby amenities etc, but the data stops there.



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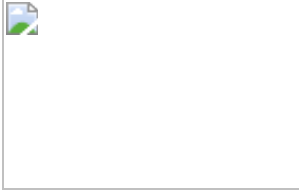
Government or law enforcement agencies would generally only be able to access vehicle data during a criminal investigation.

Automakers initially resisted sharing information then the government made transmitting data a prerequisite for getting incentives.

“They gave you dozens of reasons why they can’t give you the data,” said an anonymous government consultant who helped evaluate the policy.

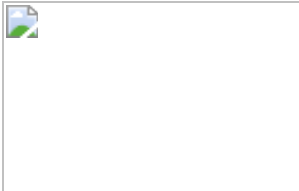
“Then we offer the incentives. Then they want to give us the data because it’s part of their profit.”

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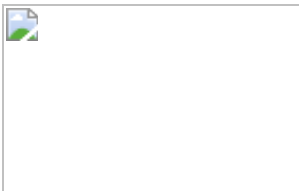
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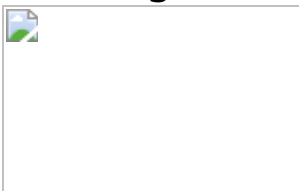
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Volkswagen Group China chief executive Jochem Heizmann said he could not guarantee the data would not be used for government surveillance.

However, he stressed that Volkswagen keeps personal data, like the driver's identity, secure within its own systems.

"It includes the location of the car, yes, but not who is sitting in it," he said, adding that cars won't reveal more information than smart phones already do.

“There is not a principle difference between sitting in a car and being in a shopping mall and having a smart phone with you.”