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TomTom admits to sending your routes and speed information to the police

By [Rory Reid \(@rory79\)](#) on [28 April 2011](#), 5:30pm

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It appears every gadget in your possession is [tracking your location](#). First it was the [iPhone](#), then [Android](#) phones and now it's your bleedin' [sat-nav](#). TomTom, perhaps in a pre-emptive strike against its own user-tracking scandal, has admitted its sat-navs can track users and inform third parties about how fast they're going.

The sat-navs in [TomTom's Live range](#) all feature built-in 3G data cards, which feed location and route information back to a central server, which allows TomTom to create a map of congestion hotspots. It's now emerged that this data, however, along with a user's speed, is being made available to local governments and authorities.

TomTom CEO Harold Goddijn [revealed the information on the company's website](#). "We are now aware that the police have used traffic information that you have helped to create to place speed cameras at dangerous locations where the average speed is higher than the legally allowed speed limit," he says.

Knowing the cops can see where you're driving and how fast you're going is eye-opening stuff, but TomTom says the data is anonymous and can never be traced back to an individual user or device. Ordinarily, we'd be reassured by this, but we recall [Apple saying something similar](#) before the location-tracking excrement hit the phone-carrying fan.

The good news here, for the paranoid drivers among us, is it's possible to opt out of the data-collection feature on TomTom's Live sat-navs. This rather defeats the object though -- if everyone with a TomTom Live sat-nav opted out, there'd be no Live data to help users avoid traffic blackspots and you'll have wasted your money by splashing out on a high-end GPS system.

Crave is now taking bets on what device will create the next tracking storm. Will our refrigerators start monitoring how many pies we've eaten? Will our door locks start telling our mums that we're staying out til the wee hours? Will our computers tell our boss we've spent all day [looking at cats on YouTube](#) instead of doing any... hang on a minute... dammit!

As ever, let us know how you feel about this in our comments section below.

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Anonymous 28 April, 2011 19:19

ANY TomTom model can and has been sending data back to TomTom (if you agreed), not just the LIVE models. It is entirely anonymous and is used to build the historical road database and for the data used in IQ Routes. In this way it can know that road A is much busier 7 - 9am Mon-Fri etc.

The Police can't know where you are and if you are speeding, only that a certain road may have an average speed that is higher than the posted limit = lets place a speed trap there. Oh and it was Dutch police only.

**Anonymous 28 April, 2011 19:22**

"Anonymous" GPS traces that start and/or end with your home every day are not anonymous.

**Anonymous 28 April, 2011 19:29**

I will stick to my folding paper maps

**Anonymous 28 April, 2011 19:50**

This site is honestly worse than a tabloid news rag sometimes.

"Knowing the cops can see where you're driving and how fast you're going is eye-opening stuff"

No it's not because you just wrote above what the police were using the information for and they're obviously using LOTS of data to determine where people are speeding and not tracking people individually. You even write that the data is anonymous so how are the cops seeing where you're driving and how fast?

**Anonymous 28 April, 2011 19:52**

Next up: Tom Tom files for bankruptcy.

**Anonymous 28 April, 2011 20:20**

This article seems to intentionally omit WHICH police department, and in which Country. This equates to more of an attempt to stir debate and direct surfers to this site. Each police department is different for each country. I would state that it is better for any police department to take the frequency of crashes in any vicinity as cause to install speed traps and cameras.. if anything to protect the general public and other commuters. But.. Speed statistics may be going a bit far, even if it is just the Dutch police at this moment.

**Anonymous 28 April, 2011 20:28**

I am sure they will not miss my business because I am looking and now rethinking if I want a gps

system. I have one now but I only turn it on at certain time. I most certain will not buy one from a company who would even think of screwing the customer and for waht?



Anonymous 28 April, 2011 20:40

It isn't just the 3G stuff in modern tom tom devices, but also reports back from "pc syncing" for updates.

What happened is that tom tom aggregates location and speed history and sells it wholesale to local governments, as it yields valuable traffic statistics. They could use it to predict traffic jams and such. Turns out the cops figured out you can also use such statistics to work out where best to place speed traps to maximise fines. That, of course, is class-action incriminating oneself. Tom tom said they hadn't realised this was happening and they'll change the licensing terms to stop that sort of thing in the future.

DO NOTE that it isn't about tracking any single individual right now; they were selling anonymised, aggregated data, obtained with permission. Yes, it is entirely possible that could have happened and it is important, but is not what was happening right now.

Oh, and please do follow up with the full page ads tom tom is using to apologise. It was the Netherlands, and tom tom is a dutch company. What they're selling to other countries and how that gets used didn't come out. Investigate?

DISCLOSURE: Not affiliated with tom tom in any way, described by acquaintances as slightly paranoid privacy buff. Still and all, I do believe tom tom deserves credit for how they're handling this.



Anonymous 28 April, 2011 20:53

Maybe if more people weren't too stupid to read a map....



Anonymous 28 April, 2011 21:04

What if your refrigerator tattled on you about having expired doctor issued drugs in your fridge? Do you think you should be charged with the crime of possession of a controlled substance for not throwing away any expired meds?



Anonymous 28 April, 2011 21:09

funny that TomTom sells data to administration (IMHO it wasn't police directly) and sells YOU a TomTom module to warn you about speed cameras ?!?!



Anonymous 28 April, 2011 22:06

I have a laptop and a Tracphone.

my laptop I use to follow news and keep a few documents on file.

my Tracphone I use to call my kids when I want to see them and go golfing, or have breakfast.

I quit facebook not long after I signed in.

through rental cars, I noticed that the farther you get away from a major freeway, the more useless the GPS is. but being connected to a satelite network is your choice, you are traceable.

when you bought it you opened yourself up to the ramifications of having it.

I stumbled across this article, not a regular to this site ... so I can't speak to that.

But I'm with a few other commenters read a paper map and think for yourself. also called "Thomas Guide"

if you buy the toys ... you have to play the game

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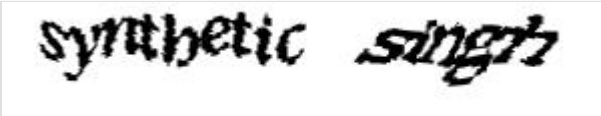
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