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NEWS-JOURNAL

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PART OF THE USA TODAY NETWORK

As Flock and other brands of automated license plate readers become ubiquitous in nearly every state, many law enforcement agencies have done little to monitor how their own employees use them. CAITIE MCMEKIN/KNOXVILLE NEWS SENTINEL FILE

Flock restricts access to data behind misuse probes

Plate reader camera investigation sparks police firings, arrests

Kenny Jacoby, Austin Fast and Jack Lemnus USA TODAY NETWORK

At least 19 police and sheriff’s office employees in five states were arrested, fired, put on administrative leave or placed under investigation over the past two months for using Flock Safety’s vast network of license plate reader cameras to track cars’ locations for potentially improper or illegal purposes.

But it was USA TODAY reporters, not their police supervisors, who spotted their irregular search activity.

In Dallas, Georgia, state investigators arrested a 911 director who searched more than 2,500 times for cars belonging to her estranged husband and his new girlfriend.

In Sarasota, Florida, an officer who tracked an ex-girlfriend’s car at least 335 times over two months was fired and arrested.

See FLOCK, Page 7A

“It’s an invasion of privacy. Who gave y’all permission to look for me while I was going down the road? I’m not a wanted fugitive. I’m not a child molester. I’m not a thief. Why were y’all looking at me?”

Billy Taylor
Whose vehicle was repeatedly searched by his estranged wife, Heidi Taylor, then the 911 director for the Dallas, Georgia, Police Department

Iran vows response to new U.S. attacks

Threatens American energy companies’ facilities in Gulf region

Nayera Abdallah and Eman Abouhassira
REUTERS

DUBAI – Iran threatened on Sept. 7 to retaliate against any new U.S. attacks on its assets, warning that the energy production chain in the region was “sprawling, accessible and exposed” and that U.S. oil and gas companies there shared that exposure.

“Strike our assets and you get struck,” Iranian Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf said after recent U.S. and Iranian strikes on shipping pushed oil prices up to six-week highs at one point on Sept. 7.

On Sept. 6, senior Iranian security official Mohsen Rezaei said Iran would announce plans for a new restricted zone in the Gulf in the coming days and that it would soon approve maps of a new shipping corridor through the Strait of Hormuz.

Iran has throttled traffic through the strait, a vital global oil and gas supply route, since the war with the United States began with U.S. and Israeli strikes on Feb. 28.

Rezaei said the new restricted zone would begin from where a U.S. naval blockade of Iran starts and extend into areas of the Gulf. Any ship entering the new zone would be added to an Iranian sanctions list, he said.

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An average of 10 commodity ships transited the Strait of Hormuz per day in the past 10 days, the lowest since May, contributing to a rise in oil prices on Sept. 7. ATTA KENARE/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

Manatee watercraft deaths spike in two Florida rivers

Manatees gather at Porpoise Point Inlet in Vilano Beach on June 10. Florida wildlife officials are urging boaters to use caution amid a rise in watercraft-related manatee deaths. LUCIA VITI/THE RECORD

James Call
USA TODAY NETWORK - Florida

In the summer of 2026, a surge in boat-related manatee deaths on the Wakulla and St. Marks rivers claimed three manatees in three months with a fourth death attributed to human interaction, according to wildlife officials and law enforcement.

Since June 2, five manatees have been found dead in the two rivers, with at least three of the deaths attributed to collisions with boats, a fourth involving human interaction, and the fifth being a

stillborn calf, according to Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) data.

FWC communications director Shannon Knowles said wildlife officers investigated the boat deaths and found no evidence indicating the collisions occurred within a manatee protection zone or were due to an intentional violation by a boater.

The increase in manatee fatalities is notable because watercraft deaths are uncommon along the St. Marks and Wakulla rivers. The three boat-related fatalities reported since June is the same

number of watercraft-caused manatee deaths the county recorded during all of 2023, 2024 and 2025 combined.

Boat collisions leading threat to manatees

According to the Fish and Wildlife Research Institute (FWRI), collisions with boats account for roughly 20–25% of reported manatee deaths statewide. With four months remaining in the

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