



# DATA BROKER

## THREATS:

# NATIONAL SECURITY

The data broker industry is a threat to national security. Policymakers must establish strong safeguards to protect national security.

## SUMMARY



Data brokers build extensive dossiers of information on Americans, including members of the armed forces.

Personal data is collected as we browse the internet and use online services, including location records, biometric data, and health and financial info. Companies sell that info to data brokers, who compile records, draw inferences, and resell datasets and dossiers



The lack of meaningful restrictions on data brokers allows foreign adversaries to purchase detailed records about service members and other government officials, which has revealed sensitive national security information like patrol routes around military bases.

Bad actors use information from data brokers to blackmail or use phishing tactics to obtain state secrets.



## REINING IN DATA BROKERS WOULD PROTECT NATIONAL SECURITY

Policymakers at the federal and state level have an urgent responsibility to limit data brokers' ability to collect, share, and sell personal data. Stronger laws and rules are necessary to provide guardrails around data brokers' collection and sale of personal information.

**Minimizing the data that brokers amass and sell in the first place is a powerful national security safeguard: you don't have to protect what you don't collect.**

## EXAMPLES

Duke University researchers found that data brokers sell sensitive data about active-duty military members, veterans, and their families for as little as \$.12 per record.

The Irish Council for Civil Liberties found that foreign adversaries can obtain sensitive data about US service members, politicians, and other high-profile figures through the real-time bidding system used by data brokers to target online advertisements.

In 2018, researchers and activists found that Strava's global heat map showing user activity records could be used to identify the locations of military bases and patrol routes, as well as identifying information for the service members who used Strava in those locations.

A 2024 investigation discovered that data brokers sold location data which could be used to track the location of service members stationed at US military bases around the world. The researchers were able to track individual servicemember's devices as they moved around the military base and to off-base locations including their children's schools, grocery stores, bars, and brothels.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

<https://epic.org/issues/consumer-privacy/data-brokers/>

## WORKS CITED

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