

China's Big Brother: World's Biggest ID Database

Public Security database with 1.3 billion entries

By [Global Research](#)

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In a modest 200-square meters enclosure, the National Citizen Identity Information Center (NCIIC) in Beijing hosts the world's biggest ID database, with over 1.3 billion entries.

"By collecting the identity information of China's 1.3 billion population in five years, through an investment amounting to tens of millions yuan, we have succeeded in collating the world's biggest ID database in full compliance with international standards," said Lu Subing, vice director of NCIIC.

In recent times, China has been at significant risk from fraudulent ID cards, which allow swindlers to make illicit gains from social security, banking and telecommunication industries. Police figures have placed at 90 percent the amount of premeditated crimes involving false ID cards, a bane which has cost hundreds of millions of yuan in economic losses annually.

Back in 2001, the Ministry of Public Security conducted a feasibility study of an ID database scheme, jointly carried out across 30 departments and units tackling civil affairs, social security, industry and commerce. At the end of May 2003, NCIIC's four departments reported in, having completed initial work on software research and development, equipment distribution and hardware purchase as well as having begun trial operation. By the end of 2003, the database had garnered information on 210 million people across 42 cities.

The pride in Lu's voice was audible as he revealed that "by the end of last year, the identity information of nearly 1.3 billion people was stored in the database, thus marking the completion of the whole system. Since then, the database has been on the front-lines of identity theft and economic crime prevention."

According to Lu, NCIIC has helped to investigate over 1,100 individuals from all walks of life including banking, communication, auto industry, financial inspection, e-commerce, personal investigation and logistics.

Explaining the services available to the public, Lu explained that "sending the name and ID number of the person you wish to inquire about in a message to 5110 (for China Mobile users) or 9951 (for China Unicom users), you will receive an answer as to whether your information was a match or not. If the result matched the database, you may ask for a further photo comparison.""

Many examples on the center's website testify to satisfied users of the initiative.

One customer cancelled the purchase of a house, worth 500,000 yuan, after he used the center to discover his client had provided him with false ID.

“In the past, I always worried some clients might steal my cars by leaving a false ID number. I feel much safe now I can confirm their information at the center,” wrote the manager of a car leasing company.

According to Lu, the coverage provided by the inquiry service covers 0.97 billion mobile phones, telecom and Internet clients and its services range beyond text messages to the Internet, MMS, WAP and IVR.

However, due to privacy and security concerns, a user cannot obtain a name using just an ID number or vice versa.

The next step is already being worked on by NCIC and the Bank of Communication who are teaming up to create an anti-fraud ID information system, aiming to reduce credit card application scams.

NCIC’s influence has also extended to telecom, education and social security sectors, aiming to provide comprehensive anti-fraud services.

“Under the coordination of the State Council Information Office, we will gradually expand our service and share more data with other departments,” said Lu.

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