Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510
November 29, 2018

Mr. Jeffrey Bezos
Chief Executive Officer
Amazon.com, Inc.
410 Terry Avenue N.
Seattle, WA 9809

Dear Mr. Bezos,

We write to reiterate our concerns about Amazon's facial recognition technology, Rekognition, and request additional information about this product and your decision to make it available to law enforcement agencies. Facial recognition technology may one day serve as a useful tool for law enforcement officials working to protect the American public and keep us safe. However, at this time, we have serious concerns that this type of product has significant accuracy issues, places disproportionate burdens on communities of color, and could stifle Americans' willingness to exercise their First Amendment rights in public.

These matters are particularly troubling given newly available information on pilot programs that employ Rekognition technology, and recent revelations that your company is actively marketing this product to law enforcement entities, including U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement. According to reports, law enforcement officials have begun using cameras to collect raw video footage of bystanders and transfer that data to Amazon servers for facial recognition analysis.[1] Notably, these pilot programs lack key internal and external policy guidelines, and were reportedly initiated without any hands-on training from Amazon for participating law enforcement officers.[2]

Regrettably, despite asking you a series of questions on this subject and requesting specific information in letters sent to you on July 26, 2018 and July 27, 2018, your company has failed to provide sufficient answers.[3] We renew our call for information and request written responses to the following questions:

1. Please provide the results of any internal accuracy or bias assessments that Amazon has performed on Rekognition. Please provide this information broken down and in

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[1] Jake Laperruque & Andrea Peterson, *Amazon Pushes ICE to Buy Its Face Recognition Surveillance Tech*, Daily Beast (October 23, 2018), https://www.thedailybeast.com/amazon-pushes-ice-to-buy-its-face-recognition-surveillance-tech.

[2] Davey Alba, *Documents Reveal How The City of Orlando Is Using Amazon's Facial Recognition Technology*, BuzzFeed (October 26, 2018), https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/daveyalba/amazon-facial-recognition-orlando-police-department.
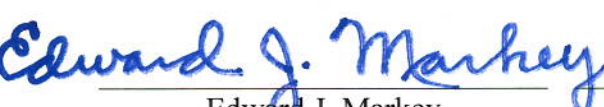
[3] Letter from Senator Edward J. Markey et al. to Jeffrey Bezos, CEO, Amazon.com, Inc. (July 26, 2018) https://www.markey.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/Amazon%20Facial%20Recognition%20Tech.pdf; Letter from Congressman Jimmy Gomez et al. to Jeffrey Bezos, CEO, Amazon.com, Inc. (July 27, 2018) https://gomez.house.gov/uploadedfiles/07272018_amazon_rekognition_letter_final.pdf.
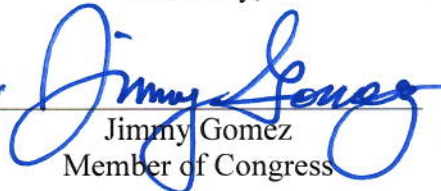
combination for race, gender, ethnicity, and age.

    a. Please describe in detail how Amazon tests for facial recognition accuracy, how often Amazon tests, and whether these results have been independently verified.

    b. Please also describe in detail how Amazon tests for bias in its facial recognition results, especially racial bias.

2. Does Amazon build protections into the Rekognition system to protect the privacy rights of innocent Americans caught up in either the biometric databases used by law enforcement for comparisons, or in the data law enforcement uses to search those databases? Does Amazon Rekognition contain a mechanism for automatically deleting unused biometric data?

3. Does Amazon conduct audits of Rekognition use by law enforcement to ensure that (1) the software is not being abused for secretive government surveillance, (2) the software is not facilitating systems that disproportionately impact people based on protected characteristics in potential violation of federal civil rights laws, and (3) the software is not being used in violation of Amazon's terms of use? If so, what steps does Amazon take to end any such uses of Rekognition?

4. Is Amazon Rekognition currently integrated with any police body-camera technology or existing public-facing camera networks? Please identify any government customers using Rekognition for continual, real-time facial recognition of the public.

We respectfully request that you provide this information in your response by December 13, 2018.

Sincerely,

Edward J. Markey
United States Senator

Jimmy Gomez
Member of Congress

Luis V. Gutiérrez
Member of Congress

Jan Schakowsky
Member of Congress

Pramila Jayapal
Member of Congress

Ro Khanna
Member of Congress

Judy Chu
Member of Congress

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John Lewis
Member of Congress