https://www.upsonbeacon.com/news/tpd-officer-fired-for-misuse-of-flock-system/article_b1eff9a7-2be8-4ae5-b7b0-5a088a72c7d1.html

FEATURED | TOP STORY

TPD Officer Fired for Misuse of Flock System

No Malicious Intent Indicated; Matter Referred to GBI for Further Investigation

Bridge Turner
Oct 22, 2026



Thomaston Police Chief Mike Richardson



Following an inquiry from The Upson Beacon, Thomaston Police Chief Mike Richardson has confirmed that a TPD officer was terminated Aug. 31 following investigation into her alleged misuse of the department's Flock camera system.

An Aug. 25 email from The Washington Post to Chief Richardson indicated the officer had searched one license plate more than 100 times. Richardson ordered a "deeper dive" into license plate recognition data and

TPD LPR User Agreement.pdf
Updated 5 hrs ago

found that the officer conducted approximately 400 searches on two vehicles operated by the same individual in 2025.

On Aug. 27, the officer was placed on administrative leave. Despite no finding of malicious intent, according to Richardson, the officer was terminated four days later for violation of city department policy and state law.

“The investigation found no evidence that searches were conducted to intentionally facilitate criminal activity, harassment, or unauthorized monitoring of a third party,” Richardson stated. “However, the investigation established that the system had been repeatedly used for an unauthorized personal purpose, in violation of department policy and applicable Georgia law.”

Immediately after termination, Richardson said he referred the matter to Georgia Bureau of Investigation for an independent probe. Richardson added that he briefed Thomaston City Council members the following day on the internal investigation, termination, and ensuing GBI investigation.

City Manager Russell Thompson said Richardson met with him prior to every phase of the process after receiving The Washington Post email.

“People are going to make mistakes, and we deal with them as quickly as possible,” Thompson said. “To resolve an issue like this in less than five business days… that’s light speed in government time.”

The individual whose tags were checked reportedly was a friend of the officer. Richardson said when the friend was informed of the instances, “she laughed and did not seem upset.” Regardless, appropriate action was required, he added.

“Public trust is fundamental to effective law enforcement, and our officers are entrusted with access to sensitive information for a specific purpose: to protect our community and investigate crime,” Richardson said.

“Unauthorized use of any law enforcement database for personal reasons is unacceptable, regardless of circumstances,” he continued. “When concerns are brought to our attention, we have a responsibility to investigate them thoroughly, take appropriate action, and continually strengthen safeguards designed to prevent misuse.”

In addition to policies governing use of LPR technology for several years, the department has taken proactive steps in response to the incident:

•Enhanced monitoring

•Weekly reviews and quarterly audits

•Documented justification for searches

•Mandatory user agreement and training

•Policy review and revisions

•Continued state-level collaboration

Flock added a monitoring tool to its system in January 2026 which flags suspicious activity.

“While the department recognizes that LPR technology must be carefully managed, it remains a valuable investigative tool when used appropriately,” Richardson said. “Flock has assisted Thomaston investigators in homicides, recovery of stolen vehicles, and investigation of thefts and other criminal offenses.

“In one homicide investigation, the technology contributed to the apprehension of a suspect within hours of the reported crime,” he continued. “The department believes these public safety benefits must be balanced with clear restrictions, consistent oversight, and accountability for every person granted access to the system.

“We will continue to hold our personnel accountable, review our practices, and take appropriate steps to ensure the public can have confidence in how this technology is used,” Richardson concluded. “TPD remains committed to transparency, professional integrity, and responsible use of technology in service to the community.”

All TPD personnel have been trained and have signed a 13-point user agreement for Flock usage, including consequences for misuse. ***See attached document to review the 13-point user agreement in full.***

Richardson serves on the Georgia Association of Chiefs of Police and is slated to be named president of the executive board in 2027. He also serves on the subcommittee for policy and legislation.

Chief Richardson initiated a crime suppression unit at TPD which led to a reduction in vehicle break-ins and thefts in Thomaston.

Bridge Turner
Editor in Chief

THOMASTON POLICE DEPARTMENT

Chief Mike Richardson

1100 Barnesville Street, Thomaston, Georgia 30286

AUTOMATED LICENSE PLATE RECOGNITION USER AGREEMENT

Access is a privilege based on assignment, training, and continuing enforcement needs.
All activity is attributable to the individual account and may be audited.

User Information

Employee Name:		Employee ID:	
Rank/Title:		Assignment:	
Work Email:		Supervisor:	

AGREEMENT AND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

As a condition of receiving or retaining access to Agency ALPR systems and data, I acknowledge and agree with the following:

1. **Law Enforcement Purposes Only.** I will access, search, view, use, obtain, preserve, or disseminate ALPR data only for legitimate and documented law enforcement or public safety purpose consistent with Agency policy and O.C.G.A. § 35-1-22.
2. **No Personal or Improper Use.** I will not use ALPR systems for curiosity, personal business, favors, domestic or relationship matters, civil disputes, harassment, intimidation, improper tracking, political purposes, or monitoring constitutionally protected activity.
3. **Complete Search Documentation.** For every historical search, I will enter the required valid offense or incident type, case number or CAD event number, and complete, truthful, and specific reasons. I will not use vague, misleading, false, or placeholder reasons.
4. **Individual Account Security.** I will use only my assigned account and will protect my password, authentication codes, and/or other credentials. I will not share my credentials, permit another person to use my account, or conduct a search under another user's account.
5. **Alerts Are Investigative Leads.** I understand that an ALPR alert is not a confirmed hit and does not establish that the registered owner or associated person is driving or occupying the vehicle. Before enforcement action, I will verify the captured image, confirm the source record remains current, and establish the legal basis required for action.
6. **Custom Hot Lists.** I will create or modify a custom hot list only when a documented law enforcement reason exists. I will include the required case/CAD information, reason, cautions, contact information, requested action, and appropriate expiration or review date.
7. **Sharing and Dissemination.** I will share ALPR data only with authorized personnel or law enforcement agencies for a documented law enforcement purpose and in accordance with department policy. I will refer all legal demands and public-records requests to the Office of Professional Standards (OPS).
8. **Data Protection and Evidence.** I will protect ALPR information from unauthorized viewing, disclosure, alteration, downloading and retention. Any ALPR material preserved for an investigation or prosecution will be stored in an authorized case file, evidence, or records management system.

THOMASTON POLICE DEPARTMENT
Chief Mike Richardson
1100 Barnesville Street, Thomaston, Georgia 30286

AUTOMATED LICENSE PLATE RECOGNITION USER AGREEMENT

9. **Administrative Use Restrictions.** I will not use ALPR data for routine employee location monitoring, attendance verification, productivity tracking, or other administrative purposes unless an authorized administrative investigation has been approved by the Police Chief or his/her designee.

10. **Audit and Monitoring.** I understand that ALPR searches, reasons, account activity, custom hot list entries, and sharing activity are logged and subject to administrative audits or reviews. I have no expectation of privacy in my agency ALPR activity.

11. **Reporting Duty.** I will immediately report suspected misuse, unauthorized access, credential compromise, security incidents, inaccurate entries, or policy violations to my supervisor, the Division Commander, or another appropriate command authority.

12. **Training and Continued Eligibility.** I have completed or will complete all required initial and annual ALPR training. I understand that access may be modified, suspended, or revoked when or if training expires, my assignment changes outside of enforcement activities, or policy compliance is questioned. *Note: Reading and completing this document constitutes training.*

13. **Consequences.** I understand that misuse may result in remedial training, loss of access, disciplinary action up to and including termination, and referral for criminal investigation. I understand that access under false pretenses or for any purpose other than a law enforcement purpose may violate O.C.G.A. § 35-1-22 and constitutes a misdemeanor of a high and aggravated nature.

USER CERTIFICATION

By signing below, I certify that I have read and or received access to the current Agency ALPR policy, completed the required training, had the opportunity to ask questions, and agree to comply with this agreement. I understand that this agreement does not replace the policy or state law.

Employee Signature: _____ Date: _____

Division Commander: _____ Date: _____

Chief of Police: _____ Date: _____