

## NATGRID

NATGRID or the National Intelligence Grid is a part of the radical revamp of the intelligence and security framework of India initiated by the former Home Minister P. Chidambaram. It was proposed to be established in the aftermath of the 26/11 Mumbai attack in 2008 which had exposed vulnerabilities in Indian Intelligence gathering and action networks.

In 2020, NATGRID and National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) signed a MoU which will give access to FIRs and reports on stolen vehicles to NATGRID. This is part of the ongoing initiative of making NATGRID the centralised data access solution for security and intelligence agencies.

While Police is part of the State List (Read about the 7th Schedule of the Indian Constitution at the linked article), approx 14000 police stations in the country have to file the First Information Reports (FIRs) in the Crime and Criminal Tracking Network and Systems (CCTNS) Database. NCRB acts as a central repository and will share the CCTNS data with NATGRID after the proposed plan in MoU goes live.

### Why was NATGRID established?

The 26/11 attacks on Mumbai led to the exposure of several weaknesses in India's intelligence gathering and action networks. NATGRID is part of the radical overhaul of the security and intelligence apparatuses of India that was mooted by the then Home Minister P. Chidambaram in 2009. The National Investigation Agency (NIA) and the National Counter Terrorism Centre (NCTC) are two organisations established in the aftermath of the Mumbai attacks of 2008.

Before the Mumbai attacks, a Pakistani origin American Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) operative David Coleman Headley had visited India several times and done a recce of the places that came under attack on 26/11.

Despite having traveled to India several times and having returned to the US through Pakistan or West Asia, his trips failed to raise the suspicion of Indian agencies as they lacked a system that could reveal a pattern in his unusual travel itineraries and trips to the country. It is argued that had a system like the NATGRID been in place, Headley would have been apprehended well before the attacks.

### NATGRID - Features

The National Intelligence Grid or NATGRID is the integrated intelligence grid connecting databases of core security agencies of the Government of India. It collects comprehensive patterns of intelligence that can be readily accessed by intelligence agencies.

1. The office of NATGRID is attached to the Ministry of Home Affairs. NATGRID was initiated in 2009 with Rs 2800 crore budget.

2. It is the integrated intelligence framework connecting the databases of security agencies of the Government of India to gather inclusive patterns of intelligence that can be accessed by intelligence agencies.
3. It is a counter terrorism measure involved in collecting and collating a host of information from government databases including credit card transactions, tax details, bank account details, visa, immigration records and itineraries of air and rail travel.
4. The combined data shall be accessible by the central agencies namely the Directorate General of Central Excise Intelligence, Central Board of Excise and Customs, Narcotics Control Bureau, Enforcement Directorate, Directorate of Revenue Intelligence , Central Board of Direct Taxes, Financial intelligence unit, Central Bureau of Investigation, the Intelligence Bureau and the Research and Analysis Wing.
5. Unlike the central organizations like NCTC and the NIA, the NATGRID is necessarily a tool that enables security agencies to detect and collect relevant information on terror suspects from database pooled from various different organizations and services in the country. It will help in the identification, capture, and prosecution of terrorists and help preempt terrorist plots.
6. NATGRID also helps the police and the Intelligence Bureau keep a tab on persons with suspicious backgrounds. The police would have access to all the data related to that person and any movement by this person would also be tracked with the help of the database. A pattern search and recognition system helps in reducing human rights violations while extracting information.