



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on June 7, 2012

San Francisco to Test Big Brother Cameras

The United States continues its slow morphing into Big Brotherdom, this time through the use of cameras that [predict](#) crimes before they take place based on “suspicious” behavior. The cameras will then summon law enforcement to help pre-empt the crime from taking place.

The Daily Mail (Britain) [reports](#), “Using a range of in-built parameters of what is ‘normal’ the cameras then send a text message to a human guard to issue an alert- or call them.” They can track up to 150 people at a time and will build up a “memory” of suspicious behavior to begin determining what is inappropriate.

BRS Labs, the company behind the camera, indicates that the cameras “have the capability to learn from what they observe.”

BRS Labs President John Frazzini said that the technology involves 11 patents that deal with the camera’s ability to learn.

They are also equipped with the technology to adjust for poor light or shaky imagery, and have a series of “trip wires” that become activated and then alert a human supervisor. The footage is then sent over the Internet to employees with a text message summarizing the details.

“The video surveillance technology we have invented is distinctly and materially different from the simple recognition capabilities found in video analytics solutions currently available from a number of vendors in the physical security market,” Frazzini said in a [statement](#). “Generally speaking, video analytics software receives video data from cameras, and issues alerts based on very specific and narrowly defined human programmed rules that have failed to provide operational value in the video surveillance market. In strong contrast to those limited and deteriorating solutions, the patented technology of BRS Labs does not require any human pre-programmed rules, thereby providing an inherently scalable enterprise class software platform to the video surveillance market.”

The cameras have already been installed in prime tourist attractions, government buildings and military bases, and are now being prepared to be installed throughout the transportation system in San Francisco, including buses, trams, and subways.

According to the company, the cameras will eventually be placed in 12 San Francisco stations, 22 cameras per station, totaling nearly 300 cameras in all.

The San Francisco cameras include a special feature that turns the footage into code before they are analyzed.

Law enforcement agencies in Washington, D.C., have already been using similar technology that was developed by the University of Pennsylvania. They claim the technology can predict crimes before they are committed and who will commit them. That system is able to go through a database of crimes and





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use algorithms and different variables, including geography, criminal records, and ages to determine when, where, and how a crime is committed, and by whom.

According to the *London Guardian*, counterterrorism experts have been working on ways to develop advanced technologies that would spot potential terrorists before they strike for years.

IN 2007, the *Guardian* reported, "Scientists and engineers have been asked to devise ways of analyzing people's behavior and physiology from afar, in the hope they may reveal clues about their mental state and even their future intentions."

Project Hostile Intent, launched by the United States Department of Homeland Security, called upon security companies and government labs to build devices for the purposes of picking up signs of hostile intent.

Counterterrorism expert Anthony Richards at St. Andrews University raised some legitimate concerns about the program at the time. "There could be all kinds of reasons that might make people behave in certain ways that have nothing to do with terrorism. If you have heightened security and there are a lot of police around, it could be possible that you can feel and look guilty even when you haven't done anything wrong. "

Peter McOwan, a computer scientist who worked on developing sensors to detect people's moods at Queen Mary, University of London, said: "It's just like something from *Minority Report*. They have been watching too many Tom Cruise movies."

Project Hostile Intent was later renamed Future Attribute Screening Technology (FAST), a system that stores information on unspecified members of the public and tracks body movements, voice pitch, eye movements, body heat, breathing patterns, blink rate and pupil variation.

"The department's Science and Technology Directorate has conducted preliminary research in operational settings to determine the feasibility of using non-invasive physiological and behavioral sensor technology and observational techniques to detect signs of stress, which are often associated with intent to do harm," according to a statement DHS gave CNET. "The FAST program is only in the preliminary stages of research and there are no plans for acquiring or deploying this type of technology at this time."

But a June 2010 internal document obtained by the Electronic Privacy Information Center revealed that the program was already in use.

The cameras are just one of many measures being utilized in the so-called war on terror. As indicated by *The Daily Mail*, there have been a number of adoptions by governments worldwide in that fight:

In the UK, staffs at airports have been trained in "behavioural detection" to spot somebody acting suspiciously. It has since been discussed at the UN-backed International Civil Aviation Organization in Switzerland and could be rolled out across Europe.

U.S. airports such as Boston's Logan airport also have similar measures in place in addition to the usual metal detectors and pat-downs.

This summer the U.S. Department of Homeland Security Department will release harmless bacteria into its subway system to test biological weapons detectors.

As [noted](#) by Fast Company, 9/11 has provoked an avalanche of surveillance contracts from mass transit agencies and public institutions to support "homeland security" and anti-terrorism efforts.



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“While large mass transit agencies such as New York’s MTA and Chicago’s CTA have been cagey about their counter-terrorism efforts, trade show presentations and chatter in industry publications have given a basic idea of what is happening,” writes Fast Company.

Fortunately, many of the anti-terror programs and measures proposed by the government have been met by the general public with opposition. Privacy advocates are hoping that the pre-crime Big Brother cameras are met with the same type of opposition in San Francisco.



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