

## Technology Boost for Orwell

# EU to Monitor Deviant Behavior in Fight against Terrorism

By Wilmer Heck

**The European Union is funding ambitious programs aimed at monitoring human behavior in an effort to identify deviance and pick out potential terrorists. The implications for privacy are myriad.**

Imagine that you are a frequent flier: Long years of experience have taught you all the tips and tricks for a rapid check in. A good thing, right? Actually, in the future it may become cause for suspicion.

A European Union-funded project called ADABTS (Automatic Detection of Abnormal Behavior and Threats in Crowded Spaces) is working on ways to detect suspicious behavior. One system involves a network of cameras in airports that can measure your speed and alert the control room should it seem excessive. The system knows terrorists tend to be nervous and almost never stop for coffee. This makes a speedy traveller a suspicious traveller.

You may also want to think twice about using the airport bathroom more than once. There is a good chance you will be picked out for an extensive security check.

### Crucial to the Fight against Terrorism

"We monitor all deviant behavior," says Maarten Hogervorst of TNO Defence and Security, an independent Dutch research institute. The ADABTS project, in which TNO is a partner, is only one among hundreds of security projects under the umbrella of the EU research program Security. The program has a budget of €1.4 billion until 2013.

Following the terrorist attacks in the US in 2001 and in Europe in 2004 and 2005, Brussels saw the development of new technologies as crucial to the fight against terrorism. It also worried American companies might corner the market for security technology.

Hogervorst is funded by the EU to investigate how the ever growing number of security cameras in inner cities, airports and football stadiums can be put to a better use.

For now security personnel still manually switches between cameras to determine who deserves extra attention. The more cameras to choose from, the less effective this is. It would be much easier if the cameras themselves could determine what is suspicious and automatically show only those images to the people in the control room.

"We define what constitutes suspicious behavior through interviews with security staff and we develop software accordingly," says Hogervorst. "If security staff thinks someone moving rapidly through a crowd is suspicious, then that's the kind of images they're going to get."

There are a lot more criteria to determine what is suspicious and what is not, but TNO doesn't want them publicized for obvious security reasons.

### 'Orwellian goals'

ADABTS is not just geared towards terrorism, but also towards crime and riots. In the future, cameras will be set to detect wild arm movements, screaming or the sound of breaking glass in order to dispatch police more quickly to the scene of a mugging or a break-in.

Critics argue the defence and security industry has been given a lot of influence in developing Europe's new security strategy. "Brussels simply asked the industry: What can you guys come up with?" says Ben Hayes, a researcher at the Transnational Institute, a progressive research group.

Hayes has just published a report, *NeoConOpticon*, about a number of security projects he says have Orwellian goals. They will lead to a European surveillance system that may be lucrative for the industry,

he says, but will make every citizen a potential suspect.

He means projects like the one TNO is currently working on: using radar to detect a person's heartbeat from a distance to determine if he or she is nervous. "Because a terrorist is nervous as hell," says Frank Kooi, another TNO researcher at Soesterberg.

Thermal cameras can discover if someone has a cold nose, another sign of nervousness. "The beauty is that terrorists can't hide these kind of characteristics," Kooi says.

Much of the research is still in the initial phase, "but it has enormous potential," says Kooi. "The main reason why thermal cameras are not being used on a massive scale is the cost. But they are bound to get cheaper in the future."

### **Loss of innocence**

For airports, the ultimate goal of this new technology is to be able to scan all passengers without them even knowing. The advantage to the passengers is that they would no longer have to wait in line for the security checkpoints.

Brussels has anticipated criticism by also funding research into the ramifications of the program for privacy. One such program is HIDE: Homeland Security, Biometric Identification & Personal Detection Ethics. Irma van der Ploeg, a privacy expert with HIDE, says Hayes' report "extremely valuable".

She is afraid people will become more and more conscious of the surveillance and adapt their behavior accordingly. "Society is at risk of losing its innocence," she says. "Before you know it we will all behave the same just so we are not seen as suspicious."

Van der Ploeg is skeptical about the impact of the privacy projects within the security framework. "We analyse the technology and their possible impact. This results in an ethical and often quite critical assessment. But it doesn't seem to make much a difference."

Both Hayes and Van der Ploeg are convinced many of the projects that are now at the experimental stage will eventually find their way into people's lives. "A lot of it is going to trickle down," says Van der Ploeg.

Defence expert Ko Colijn is not so sure. He says the alarming tone of Hayes' report is "a bit exaggerated." Colijn points out that the EU does not have the authority to create a "well-oiled Orwellian society" even if it wanted to. It will be up to the individual member states to decide what is implemented. "Many projects will fall by the wayside."

"If only 20 percent of these programs are implemented, it is enough reason to be concerned," says Van der Ploeg. She agrees with Colijn however that a lot will depend on whether any future terrorist attacks occur in Europe. "If that happens it immediately creates a momentum for these kinds of initiatives."

### **URL:**

<http://www.spiegel.de/international/europe/0,1518,656468,00.html>

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