

US government embedding facial recognition technology in surveillance system

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Reports emerged this week detailing US government efforts to integrate facial recognition technology into its surveillance apparatus. The Biometric Optical Surveillance System at Stand-off Distance, or BOSS, is designed to create lists based on intensive video scanning of crowds. BOSS utilizes two towers with mounted "robotic camera structures" which take multiple pictures of faces from different angles and process the pictures to create a "3-D signature" based on each face.

According to the *Times*, BOSS was initially developed for use in Iraq and Afghanistan against opponents of the US occupations, but in 2010 "was transferred to the Department of Homeland Security to be developed for use instead by police in the United States." US government documents published in the *Times* described the purpose of BOSS, which has been developed by Kentucky based military firm Electronic Warfare Associates, as "the collection, storage, transmission and receipt of biometric and biographic data."

The FBI is building a "Next Generation Identification" system based on a "national mug shot database." Facial recognition databases will come in addition to the US government's ongoing project to photograph and catalogue as many license plates as possible.

Ginger McCall, previously of the Electronic Privacy Information Center, told the *Times* she worries the technology can be used "to systematically track everyone's public movements by using a comprehensive database of driver's license photographs."

In an email to *Ars Technica*, Woodrow Hartzog, professor at the Cumberland School of Law, wrote that facial recognition technology raises the possibility that

ordinary people's day-to-day activities can be "recorded, aggregated, analyzed and linked back to them by name by law enforcement officials."

While defending the existing surveillance programs as "narrowly targeted," the US ruling elite is pushing ahead to implement ever more sophisticated spying techniques. Systems are being put into place that enable the state to track and exhaustively catalogue individuals' activities, movements, associations personal and political, financial records, etc. The capitalist ruling class is preparing for the outbreak of mass struggles by developing information gathering capabilities of unprecedented power. The working class must take notice and prepare accordingly.



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