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All That's New In Biometrics
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If you are ignorant
of both your enemy
and yourself, then
you are ... certain to
be defeated.

If you know
yourself, but not
your enemy, for
every battle won, you
will suffer a loss.

If you know your
enemy and yourself,
you will win every
battle.

Sun Tzu
Art of War
500 B.C

SUBJECT: HIGH-TECH LICENSE PLATE READERS EFFECTIVE, BUT RAISE ETHICAL ISSUES

"Sumner county, Tennessee, law-enforcement officers have been using high-tech license plate readers for some time now, and say that the technology has led to the solving of several crimes.

Police maintains that the ability to capture the location of multiple license plates simultaneously is one of the most powerful crime-fighting tools at their disposal, and has already led them to vehicles used in crimes.

At the same time, the technology is considered by many to be a government surveillance, raising privacy concerns and pushing law enforcement agencies to determine how the information developed is used.

According to the *Tennessean*, Gallatin detective James Kemp recognizes that there are many that would be concerned about an invasion of privacy, but he also maintains that "the possibilities are endless there for solving crimes. It's just a multitude of information out there — to not tap into it to better protect your citizens, that's ludicrous."

Kemp, a former traffic officer, learned how easy it is to gather information. All he had to do was head out on his normal patrol, while cameras mounted atop the cruiser captured thousands of images a day. A computer inside the car checks the nearby license plates against various crime databases, including wanted suspects, stolen vehicles, and sex offenders. It also checks for tax dodgers. If the computer finds a match, a beep alerts the officer.

Local police also makes use of stationary cameras. An officer can key in a license plate, even a partial tag, and get information on where that vehicle was seen near a crime scene. The officer simply types in the license plate, even a partial, and receives from a database the locations and times of when that vehicle was seen.

"That's the whole key: the databases," said Hendersonville police Lt. Paul Harbsmeier. "If we collect so many tags just for Hendersonville, it doesn't do any good for anybody else. Let's say we catch somebody that was involved in residential burglaries, we might check that tag to see if they were in the vicinity of any other burglaries."

The cameras, used by the European police agencies since the 1990s, first appeared in Middle Tennessee in 2007 in Franklin County and have become common throughout the region. The new stationary cameras coming to Sumner County will include the first three in the region to be permanently mounted alongside high-traffic roadways, instead of being attached to police cars.

Police said the stationary scanners will read more license plates per day, and will alert police when a wanted vehicle has entered the area.

According to the company that developed the system's, PIPS Technology in Knoxville, a majority of reader system sales are now for fixed locations. The opposite was true when the company launched in 2005, when 90 percent of systems were attached to police cruisers, according to Bryan Sturgill, a PIPS technology sales specialist.

There has been a major push among law enforcement agencies to expand the use of the reader-cameras. In Montgomery County, Maryland, police used a reader to find a suspect in the killing of a university professor. Last month, police in Downey, California, said they rescued a woman and her two daughters from a hotel after a plate reader pointed the police to the car driven by their abductor.

(Continued On Next Page) FBI-2485-ALPRS

"It is pardonable to be defeated, but never to be surprised."

Frederick the Great, King of Prussia (1712-1786)

"An organization's ability to learn, and translate that learning into action rapidly, is the ultimate competitive advantage."

Jack Welch, former CEO of General Electric (1935-)

Readers are plentiful; Thinkers are rare."
Harriet Martineau, English writer (1802-1876)

There has been legislative reaction to the license plate readers.

Officials in Columbia, Missouri have required police to purge the databases after thirty days, and legislators in Maine have passed legislation requiring a similar purge period.

Police have defended the readers as a tool to gather what is already public. "A license plate is what's called plain view," Kemp said. "It's displayed right on a vehicle. It's no different than officers driving around town and looking at your tags." He added, "This license plate reader has no prejudice."

SOLE SOURCE: *Homeland Security Newswire*, 05/08/2012.

RELATED COMPETITIVE INTELLIGENCE REPORTS

- [20100707 Press 2010-40 UK Will More Tightly Regulate License Plate Readers](#)
- [20110929 Press 2011-147 US Military Seeks Non-Cooperative Biometric Tracking Tech via UAVs](#)
- [20111128 Press 2011-202 License Plate Readers & Privacy Concerns](#)
- [20120305 Press 2012-33 Petition Demands FAA Protect Privacy and Regulate Drones - Could Connect to NGI and IDENT](#)
- [20120323 Press 2012-37 California Bill Would Restrict Data Usage From License Plate Scanners](#)

RELATED NEWS ARTICLES

- Privacy Impact Assessment Report for the Utilization of License Plate Readers. ([International Association of Chiefs of Police](#), Sept. 2009)
- NY: In 2010, as the police in NY were ramping up their reliance on [license plate reading cameras as a new crime-fighting tool](#), a Manhattan judge affirmed their use as lawful. In a [decision from April 2010](#), the acting Supreme Court Justice held that the use of the cameras did not violate a defendant's Fourth Amendment right against unreasonable searches. (NY Times, 04/14/11)
- VT: Court Denies Man's Constitutional Challenge of Plate Reader. ([Orleans Record](#), 12/28/11)
- In addition to sharing driver's license images and partnering with traffic enforcement, Nlets is working to create a [LPR Pointer System](#) prototype to establish a single national LPR repository that law and traffic enforcement agencies across all states can access to determine if a license-plate has been captured by an LPR camera. ([Federal Criminal Defense Lawyers](#), 3/21/12)
- TX: Dallas-Fort Worth authorities increasingly using surveillance tech. Dallas PD's plans to use license plate readers in high-crime areas. ACLU: "You deploy these scanners, and the vast majority whose plates are scanned have not done anything wrong." ([Star Telegram](#), 4/20/12)
- DC: At a daylong anti-drone summit in Washington on 4/27, panelists said drones have the potential to be equipped with heat sensors, GPS, license-plate readers, extremely high-res cameras, infrared cameras, and facial-recognition software. Coordinated swarms easily could track people's daily movement from home to the office to a political rally to the grocery store. In Feb., Congress directed the FAA to craft regulations governing the licensing of commercial drones. That could open the skies to increased domestic surveillance and commercial data-gathering of the sort that concerns groups such as the ACLU. Current privacy law doesn't offer enough protection from the invasive use of those kinds of technology, and laws need to be updated to limit the use of surveillance drones, per the ACLU. ([Toledo Blade](#), 4/29)
- DC: Cell Phone Tracking, License Plate Readers Raise Privacy Concerns. Privacy advocates point out it also scans the comings and goings of innocent people and stores the data for several years. "If they know where my car has been for the last two years, that's a frightening amount of data and its irresistible for them to look at for their police purposes," per the ACLU. Police Chief Cathy Lanier said, "We...follow the code of the federal regulations there in that the data is purged every three years and is only used if there is a criminal predicate." ([WAMU](#), 5/1)
- High-tech license plate readers aid police but raise ethical questions. Courts are starting to show reluctance toward allowing govt. to continue increasing surveillance. Gathering of info on people who haven't done anything wrong could lead to further challenges. Cities also have had to figure out whether their databases are publicly available, which could open up the program to further misuse. In CT, a group of 10 towns which shared their records were forced to give the ACLU 3 year's worth of records, totaling 3.1M scans, after a FOIA request. Once a database goes public, PD restrictions about who can search thru it lose their meaning, opening possibilities for commercial ventures, and also for anyone who might be snooping. Scans could become subject to the state's open records act, depending on whether the info is kept in a way that connects the plates with vehicle owner names or the confidential law enforcement databases that the system uses. ([WBIR](#), 5/6)