

PRESS RELEASE

SENIOR POLICE OFFICER HAILS INNOVATIVE CUSTODY SOLUTION FROM OMNIPERCEPTION

Following extensive trials Merseyside Police has given the go-ahead for the widespread installation of new facial recognition technology, helping officers to verify the identity of arrested suspects even before they reach the custody desk; and saving hundreds of hours of police time.

Assistant Chief Constable (Area Operations) Simon Byrne, said in a recent article in *Police Professional* magazine (17/10/08) that his team were delighted with how the trials had gone.

“The Digital Image Register “, he said, “is a truly innovative idea that has never been done before by a police force.”

The Digital Image Register (DIR) takes images of a suspect when they are kept in the airlock or holding cell, waiting to be booked into custody and searches the images against a locally-held data base.

This alerts the custody sergeant from the outset as to whether the person is already known to police and may be wanted on bail or warrant. It also allows him or her to decide which prisoners to process first, based on their past criminality and likely behaviour.

The DIR has been trialled at the force's busy St Anne's Custody Suite where it is already accurately identifying over two thirds of the suspects making repeat appearances.

ACC Byrne said the trial had been a success and that the force will now roll-out the DIR across all eight Merseyside custody centres from January.

He estimates that these installations will save over 2,000 hours of police time each year.

David McIntosh, the CEO of OmniPerception, that provided the facial recognition technology, explained: “Facial recognition technology can be of enormous benefit to forces because of the rapid and accurate way it can identify suspects. It has never been used by a police force in this way before and we predict that this Merseyside initiative is the first of many such innovations in the future.”

Patrick Leigh, the CEO of the DW Group that provided the hardware said: “This is a good example of where forces working in conjunction with technology providers such as ourselves and OmniPerception can produce a solution that has exciting implications for the way all police forces process suspects in custody.”

ENDS

NOTES TO EDITORS

KEY FACTS:

- Merseyside Police currently has a quarter of a million images on its database and anticipates that the database will continue to grow once the technology is rolled out force-wide.
- The force embarked on the trial because it was looking for ways to speed up the time it takes to process prisoners as they come into custody, freeing police officers to spend more time on the streets. Merseyside predicts that the technology has the potential to save in excess of 2,000 hours in officer time each year.
- OminPerception's AFIT.QA™ and Colossus™ software not only ensure good quality images but also enable the checking of images against the database in a matter of seconds – allowing for rapid identification of suspects.
- The Digital Image Register (DIR) unit is supplied by the DW Group who have been working with the force to ensure the unit is robust enough to withstand the custody environment, that the lighting is of sufficient standard to take good quality images and that it is easy for officers to use.
- Both companies have previously worked with the force on the custody booth project (DIB) which has laid the foundations for the whole facial recognition system by ensuring quality images are taken of first time offenders in custody. These images are then used to build the searchable database of faces.

About the Digital Image Register (DIR)

The Digital Image Register is a wall mounted unit produced by the DW Group that contains OmniPerception's AFIT.QA™ and Colossus™ facial recognition technology.

AFIT.QA™ ensures that the images taken are of an appropriate standard.

Colossus™ is the OmniPerception's facial biometric search engine that powers the recognition side of the system.

When a suspect reaches custody they are put into a holding cell or airlock where they have their image taken by standing in front of the DIR.

Using a touch screen, the officer enters his shoulder number, takes the picture and presses the search button which immediately searches the images against the force database of images in seconds.

If a match is recorded then relevant information is colour coded in order to comply with data protection requirements.

The colour codes are:

- Green - the person is known to police but there are no markers against their name
- Yellow – there is a bail marker against the person's name
- Amber – the person is wanted on warrant
- Red – they are wanted and are considered a serious criminal.

The Merseyside roll-out programme for this new system involves the installation of the latest 'Mark II' DIR that has been developed in conjunction with the police force to ensure that it gives the best possible service and saving of police time.