

Orwellian Scenario: The “Total Control Society” Is Here: Iris Scanners

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Global Research, November 15, 2010

rutherford.org 15 November 2010

Region: [USA](#)

Theme: [Police State & Civil Rights](#), [Science and Medicine](#)

“In the future, whether it’s entering your home, opening your car, entering your workspace, getting a pharmacy prescription refilled, or having your medical records pulled up, everything will come off that unique key that is your iris. Every person, place, and thing on this planet will be connected [to the iris system] within the next 10 years.”- Jeff Carter, CDO of Global Rainmakers

The U.S. government and its corporate allies are looking out for you-literally-with surveillance tools intended to identify you, track your whereabouts, monitor your activities and allow or restrict your access to people, places or things deemed suitable by the government. This is all the more true as another invasive technology, the iris scanner, is about to be unleashed on the American people.

Iris scanning relies on biometrics, which uses physiological (fingerprint, face recognition, DNA, iris recognition, etc.) or behavioral (gait, voice) characteristics to uniquely identify a person. The technology works by reading the unique pattern found on the iris, the colored part of the eyeball. This pattern is unique even among individuals with the exact same DNA. It is read by projecting infra-red light directly into the eye of the individual.

The perceived benefits of iris scan technology, we are told, include a high level of accuracy, protection against identity theft and the ability to quickly search through a database of the digitized iris information. It also provides corporations and the government-that is, the corporate state-with a streamlined, uniform way to track and access *all* of the information amassed about us, from our financial and merchant records, to our medical history, activities, interests, travels and so on. In this way, iris scans become de facto national ID cards, which can be implemented without our knowledge or consent. In fact, the latest generation of iris scanners can even capture scans on individuals in motion who are six feet away. And as these devices become more sophisticated, they will only become more powerfully invasive.

At the forefront of this effort is the American biometrics firm Global Rainmakers Inc. (GRI), which has partnered with the city of Leon-one of the largest cities in Mexico-to create “the most secure city in the world.” GRI plans to achieve this goal by installing iris scanners throughout the city, thus creating a virtual police state in Leon.

The eye scanners, which can scan the irises of 30-50 people per minute, will first be made available to law enforcement facilities, security check-points, police stations, detention areas, jails and prisons, followed by more commercial enterprises such as mass transit, medical centers and banks and other public and private locations. As the business and

technology magazine *Fast Company* reports:

To implement the system, the city is creating a database of irises. Criminals will automatically be enrolled, their irises scanned once convicted. Law-abiding citizens will have the option to opt-in.

However, as *Fast Company* points out, soon no one will be able to opt out:

When these residents catch a train or bus, or take out money from an ATM, they will scan their irises, rather than swiping a metro or bank card. Police officers will monitor these scans and track the movements of watch-listed individuals. "Fraud, which is a \$50 billion problem, will be completely eradicated," says Carter. Not even the "dead eyeballs" seen in Minority Report could trick the system, he says. "If you've been convicted of a crime, in essence, this will act as a digital scarlet letter. If you're a known shoplifter, for example, you won't be able to go into a store without being flagged. For others, boarding a plane will be impossible."

Mark my words: the people of Leon, Mexico, are guinea pigs, and the American people are the intended control subjects.

In fact, iris scanning technology is already being implemented in the U.S. For example, the Department of Homeland Security ran a two-week test of the iris scanners at a Border Patrol station in McAllen, Texas, in October 2010. That same month, in Boone County, Missouri, the sheriff's office unveiled an Iris Biometric station purchased with funds provided by the U.S. Department of Justice. Unknown by most, the technology is reportedly already being used by law enforcement in 40 states throughout the country.

There's even an iPhone app in the works that will allow police officers to use their iPhones for on-the-spot, on-the-go iris scanning of American citizens. The manufacturer, B12 Technologies, has already equipped police with iPhones armed with facial recognition software linked to a statewide database which, of course, federal agents have access to. (Even Disney World has gotten in on the biometrics action, requiring fingerprint scans for anyone entering its four Orlando theme parks. How long before this mega-corporation makes the switch to iris scans and makes the information available to law enforcement? And for those who have been protesting the whole-body imaging scanners at airports as overly invasive, just wait until they include the iris scans in their security protocol. The technology has already been tested in about 20 U.S. airports as part of a program to identify passengers who could skip to the front of security lines.)

The goal of the corporate state, of course, is to create a total control society—one in which the government is able to track the movements of people in real time and control who does what, when and where. In exchange, the government promises to provide security and convenience, the two highly manipulative, siren-song catchwords of our modern age

Again, as *Fast Company* reports:

For such a Big Brother-esque system, why would any law-abiding resident ever volunteer to scan their irises into a public database, and sacrifice their privacy? GRI hopes that the immediate value the system creates will alleviate any concern. "There's a lot of convenience to this—you'll have nothing to carry

except your eyes,” says Carter, claiming that consumers will no longer be carded at bars and liquor stores. And he has a warning for those thinking of opting out: “When you get masses of people opting-in, opting out does not help. Opting out actually puts more of a flag on you than just being part of the system. We believe everyone will opt-in.”

So who’s the real culprit here? While we all have a part to play in laying the foundations for this police state—the American people due to our inaction and gullibility; the corporations, who long ago sold us out for the profit they could make on us; the federal government, for using our tax dollars to fund technologies aimed at entrapping us; lobbyists who have greased the wheels of politics in order to ensure that these technologies are adopted by government agencies; the courts, for failing to guard our liberties more vigilantly; the president, for using our stimulus funds to fatten the pockets of technology execs at the expense of our civil liberties—it’s Congress that bears the brunt of the blame. Our so-called elected representatives could and should have provided oversight on these technologies in order to limit their wide-spread use by corporations and government agencies. Yet they have done nothing to protect us from the encroaching police state. In fact, they have facilitated this fast-moving transition into a suspect society.

Ultimately, it comes back to power, money and control—“how it is acquired and maintained, how those who seek it or seek to keep it tend to sacrifice anything and everything in its name”—the same noxious mix that George Orwell warned about in his chilling, futuristic novel *1984*. It is a warning we have failed to heed. As veteran journalist Walter Cronkite observed in his preface to a commemorative edition of *1984*:

1984 is an anguished lament and a warning that vibrates powerfully when we may not be strong enough nor wise enough nor moral enough to cope with the kind of power we have learned to amass. That warning vibrates powerfully when we allow ourselves to sit still and think carefully about orbiting satellites that can read the license plates in a parking lot and computers that can read into thousands of telephone calls and telex transmissions at once and other computers that can do our banking and purchasing, can watch the house and tell a monitoring station what television program we are watching and how many people there are in a room. We think of Orwell when we read of scientists who believe they have located in the human brain the seats of behavioral emotions like aggression, or learn more about the vast potential of genetic engineering. And we hear echoes of that warning chord in the constant demand for greater security and comfort, for less risk in our societies. We recognize, however dimly, that greater efficiency, ease, and security may come at a substantial price in freedom, that “law and order” can be a doublethink version of oppression, that individual liberties surrendered for whatever good reason are freedoms lost.

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