Big Brother Surveillance Begins Cuomo Unveils Facial Scanning At New York Toll Plazas

by Tyler Durden

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New York Governor Andrew Cuomo revealed on Friday that facial recognition cameras installed at bridge and tunnel toll plazas across New York City are **scanning every driver's face and feeding them into a massive database designed to catch suspected criminals.**

"When it reads that license plate, it reads it for scofflaws . . . [but] the toll is almost the least significant contribution that this electronic equipment can actually perform," Cuomo said at a press conference outside the Queens Midtown Tunnel.

"**We are now moving to facial-recognition technology**, which takes it to a whole new level, where **it can see the**

face of the person in the car and run that technology against databases... Because many times a person will turn their head when they see a security camera, so **they are now experimenting with technology that just identifies a person by their ear, believe it or not**," he continued.

The technology is currently in use **at the RFK/Triborough Bridge,** and was switched on at the Queens Midtown and Brooklyn-Battery tunnels on Friday, according to the Governor's office.

> *It will also eventually come to at least two of the Metropolitan Transportation Authority's six other spans — the Throgs Neck and Whitestone bridges — and down the road will be added at all area airports, Cuomo's office confirmed.*
>
> *A request for proposals from contractors previously published by the online news outlet Vocativ says the tech is slated for all seven of the city's toll bridges in addition to the two tunnels. -NY Post*

The Governor's office wouldn't say when forthcoming cameras will be activated, which databases will be used to compare photos, or **who will have access to the data**, however Cuomo said that license plates which are already scanned at the plazas are currently checked "for warrants, suspected felons, parole violators, terrorist suspects."

The data is then fed to NYPD cars stationed at crossings within five seconds.

"It's a phenomenal security device," he said.

Rights group steps in

Not everyone is a fan of the Orwellian system - most notably New York Civil Liberties Union, which criticized the new system as unreliable and full of potential abuse after the governor's press conference.

"Facial-recognition software is notoriously inaccurate when it comes to identifying people of color, women and children, leading to the possibility of people being mistakenly arrested or erroneously monitored," said NYCLU Executive Director Donna Lieberman.

"Government should not be casting a dragnet to track everyone going about their day through the state's bridges and tunnels, especially not when that data could be shared with other law-enforcement agencies, including immigration authorities."

New York's DMV already uses facial-recognition software to catch criminals committing fraud and identity theft, and has some 16 million photos in its databases according to a 2017 Governor's office release.

Are we becoming China?

In March, we reported on China's "SkyNet" (actual name) facial recognition system, which "**is able to identify 40 facial features**, regardless of angles and lighting, at an accuracy rate of 99.8 percent," reports *People's Daily*. "It can also scan faces and compare them with its database of criminal suspects at large **at a speed of 3 billion times a**

second, indicating that **all Chinese people can be compared in the system within only one second**."

China claims that over 2,000 criminals at large have been apprehended by public security cameras using the system - **touting the June 2017 rescue of a 6-year-old girl** who was reported missing in China's Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region based on a photo that was several years old.

In January, Bloomberg reported that Beijing was using facial recognition to surveil Muslim-dominated villages on China's western frontier, which alerts authorities when targeted individuals are more than 1,000 feet beyond designated "safe" areas.

> *The areas comprise individuals' homes and workplaces, said the person, who requested anonymity to speak to the media without authorization.*
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> *"**A system like this is obviously well-suited to controlling people**," said Jim Harper, executive vice president of the libertarian-leaning Competitive Enterprise Institute and a founding member of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Data Privacy and Integrity Advisory Committee. "'**Papers, please' was the symbol of living under tyranny in the past. Now, government officials don't need to ask**." -* Bloomberg

What's more, "SkyNet" is a perfect way to enforce China's new **"Social Credit Score" system set to launch in 2020**, which allows citizens rights based on observed behavior.

Imagine a world where many of your daily activities were constantly monitored and evaluated: what you buy at the shops and online; where you are at any given time; who your friends are and how you interact with them; how many hours you spend watching content or playing video games; and what bills and taxes you pay (or not). It's not hard to picture, because most of that already happens, thanks to all those data-collecting behemoths like Google, Facebook and Instagram or health-tracking apps such as Fitbit. ***But now imagine a system where all these behaviours are rated as either positive or negative and distilled into a single number, according to rules set by the government. That would create your Citizen Score and it would tell everyone whether or not you were trustworthy.*** *Plus, your rating would be publicly ranked against that of the entire population and used to determine your eligibility for a mortgage or a job, where your children can go to school - or even just your chances of getting a date.*

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In February 2017, the country's Supreme People's Court announced that 6.15 million of its citizens had been banned from taking flights over the past four years for social misdeeds. -Wired

Person of Interest...

And as the *Washington Post* noted in January, the Chinese city of Chongqing has engaged in a pilot project called "sharp eyes," **which connects various cameras throughout the region in order to fight crime**.

The intent is to connect the security cameras that already scan roads, shopping malls and transport hubs with private cameras on compounds and buildings, and integrate them into one nationwide surveillance and data-sharing platform.

It will use facial recognition and artificial intelligence to analyze and understand the mountain of incoming video evidence; to track suspects, spot suspicious behaviors and even predict crime; to coordinate the work of emergency services; and to monitor the comings and goings of the country's 1.4 billion people, official documents and security industry reports show. -WaPo

Perhaps China could have named their new facial recognition system after something other than the dystopian AI-controlled national defense system that led to the end of civilization in the *Terminator* series. **Then again, maybe that's the point**.

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