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GOOD STORY

The South Carolina Information and Intelligence Center's Facial Recognition Database

SUMMARY

The South Carolina Information and Intelligence Center (SCIIC) partnered with the South Carolina Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) to develop a facial recognition database. The SCIIC uses the database to assist state and local law enforcement agencies in investigating identity fraud and other types of criminal activity.

BACKGROUND

The SCIIC, a collaborative effort among 11 federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies, provides resources, expertise, and information analysis to federal, state, local, and tribal law enforcement personnel as well as to emergency responders and private business owners and operators. The center provides law enforcement agencies with up-to-date threat information and intelligence in order to "maximize their ability to detect, prevent, apprehend, and respond to criminal and terrorist activity."

In 2006, SCIIC personnel identified a capability gap in their ability to search state image databases, specifically the South Carolina DMV database. SCIIC personnel wanted to be able to conduct queries of the images located on the DMV database, to compare those images to others on the database, and to match database images to non-DMV pictures of subjects in question. This would allow the SCIIC to assist state and local law enforcement agencies in identity fraud and other types of criminal investigations. To address this need, the SCIIC partnered with the South Carolina DMV in 2007 to develop a facial recognition database.

GOAL

The SCIIC uses the facial recognition database to help state and local law enforcement agencies identify and locate subjects of interest. SCIIC analysts use the database to provide law enforcement authorities with information on a subject's name, physical address, date of birth, and social security number.

DESCRIPTION

In late 2006, the SCIIC director approached the director of the South Carolina DMV to discuss the development of a facial recognition database that would be able to query and analyze images from the state DMV database. The SCIIC director wished to model the center's database after the Pinellas County, Florida, Sheriff's Office facial recognition tool, which had proved invaluable to Florida law enforcement authorities. The director of the South Carolina DMV agreed to the proposal and received approval from the state governor's office to begin developing the database. The database was funded in part by a $1.5 million

grant from the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), which covered the initial startup costs for the system. These costs included the purchase of the facial recognition software from a private vendor, the installation of the software at the SCIIC, and the initial uploading of the DMV photos to the database.

The SCIIC and South Carolina DMV signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) formalizing procedures for how SCIIC analysts would access and utilize the facial recognition database. The MOU affirmed that the South Carolina DMV retains full control and ownership of the information housed on the database. The MOU permits the SCIIC to provide this information to law enforcement agencies if an investigation warrants.

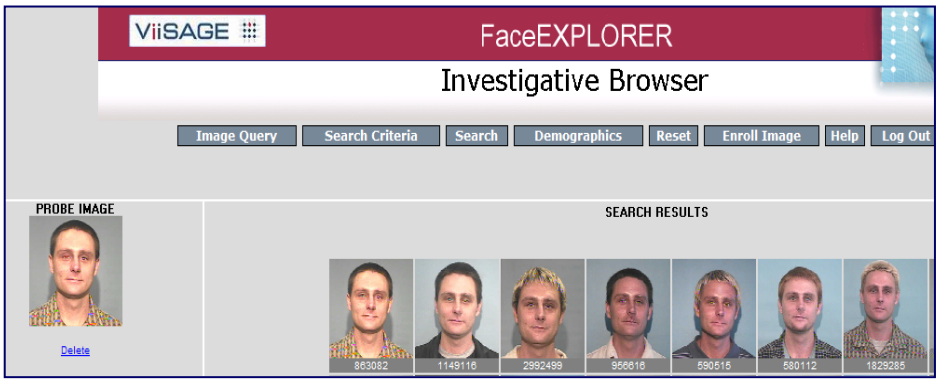
System Operations

The SCIIC and South Carolina DMV launched the facial recognition database in January 2009. The database is available 24 hours a day, year round, and is provided by the SCIIC, which pays a monthly fee to a private vendor to maintain the server that stores the images. The SCIIC initially received 3.1 million images for the database from the South Carolina DMV. The facial recognition database automatically updates itself with new images from the South Carolina DMV database. The SCIIC is currently adding over 130,000 images to the facial recognition system from the South Carolina Department of Probation, Parole, and Pardon Services database.

The SCIIC typically receives a request from a state or local investigator asking that the center attempt to identify an individual from an image gleaned from a crime scene or security camera or by other means. That image is then assigned to a trained SCIIC analyst who uploads the image to the facial recognition database and conducts a comparison search of the image with all of the photos on the system. Analysts can set specific search parameters, such as sex, age range, and race, to further refine search results. Each image provides corresponding information for an individual: first, middle, and last names; physical address; social security number; and birth date. The SCIIC analyst will then analyze the results of the search to try and identify a match for the individual based upon the photo provided. The SCIIC then provides this information to the investigating law enforcement agency.

Success Story: Identity Fraud Ring Uncovered

After the launch of the database in 2009, South Carolina DMV analysts conducted an initial search of the database's images for potential matches. Search results indicated that there was an individual in the DMV database that had seven different identities linked to several South Carolina addresses. SCIIC analysts wished to find out more information on the individual's current identity and whereabouts. The analysts developed and distributed an alert bulletin containing the subject's past identities, addresses on file, and social security numbers to South Carolina law enforcement agencies.



Database search results of the subject in question

A criminal investigator for the South Carolina Social Security Administration received the bulletin and notified the SCIIC that the subject's most recent social security number indicated that the subject was from the Clearwater, Florida, area. SCIIC analysts then sent the suspect's images to the Pinellas County, Florida, Sheriff's Office, which ran the image through its facial recognition database. The sheriff's office was able to identify the subject and apprehend him. Florida law enforcement authorities then determined that this individual was involved in a larger identity theft ring that spanned both states. Law enforcement authorities are in the process of identifying the remaining individuals participating in the ring.

Resources

The SCIIC facial recognition database cost $1.5 million to develop and was funded in part by a DHS grant. The SCIIC pays an additional fee to a private vendor that hosts the database server. The SCIIC will incur additional costs as it adds more images to the database in the future. Trained SCIIC analysts utilize the facial recognition database to assist law enforcement investigations as needed.

REQUIREMENTS

Keys to Success

DMV Partnership

The SCIIC relies on its partnership with the South Carolina DMV to ensure that the facial recognition database contains the most up-to-date images and information. The MOU between the two entities ensures that SCIIC analysts follow all proper protocols and procedures for accessing and disseminating DMV database images and information.

Expertise of Analysts

SCIIC analysts ensure that the facial recognition database is utilized effectively and in accordance with South Carolina DMV privacy regulations. SCIIC analysts rely on their knowledge and expertise to appropriately leverage facial recognition technology to assist in law enforcement investigations.

Links

South Carolina Department of Motor Vehicles
http://www.scdmvonline.com/DMVNew/default.aspx

Pinellas County Sheriff's Office
http://www.pcsoweb.com/

REFERENCES

Wilkes, Buddy. Lieutenant, South Carolina Law Enforcement Division. Interview with *Lessons Learned Information Sharing*, 12 Jun 2009.

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