

Datastrip Identity Solutions



Handheld terminals are putting biometrics and facial recognition software in the field. This has saved one police department both time and money while improving identifications. Consider this case study.

Fairfax County, VA is the most populous jurisdiction in the greater Washington, DC area. The county employs more than 1,300 police officers, and in 2006, the Fairfax County Police Department (FCPD) fielded more than 250,000 requests for police services. Fairfax County is also among the nation's wealthiest. In 2008, this county of more than 1

million residents became the first in the United States to have a median household income of more than \$100,000.

This combination of population and taxable income has made it possible for Fairfax County's government to provide leading-edge programs and services to residents. The county's most recent advancement is the addition of handheld biometric terminals that cross-reference the county's regional fingerprint database with its photo files, which improves the accuracy of ID discovery by FCPD officers in the field.

This busy department moved ahead of the technology curve back in 1983 when it agreed to participate in the



Northern Virginia Automated Regional Identification System (NOVARIS), an automatic fingerprint identification system (AFIS) database that served as a common resource for several adjoining municipalities. The system now serves the police departments of Fairfax County, Fairfax City, Arlington County, Alexandria City, Prince William County, Herndon, Vienna and Falls Church City, as well as the U.S. Secret Service. This system stores nearly 700,000 fingerprint cards of arrested individuals and more than 84,000 latent fingerprints. In 1999, photos were added to the NOVARIS system.

But in 2004, Fairfax learned that its system, along with several others regional AFIS systems, would be declared obsolete and no longer be maintained by 2008. So FCPD, along with Washington, DC and Maryland police, began identifying funding to upgrade and expand NOVARIS into a fully integrated regional system with high interoperability, increased search speed and improved imaging capability. Together, they secured an Urban Area Security Grant and a grant from the Department of Homeland Security totaling \$14 million.

Onto the Leading Edge

With a photo database in place, FCPD was already ahead of many other police departments. It just needed to make the photos and fingerprints more readily available to its officers. It identified accuracy and portability as keys to expanding on-the-street capabilities. Biometrics was one answer.

The county's NOVARIS integrator recommended the DSV2+TURBO® from Datastrip Inc. The handheld biometric terminal has a fingerprint scanner and card reader, and it can also take photos on the scene. Further, these mobile units were easy to clear through purchasing pro forma because they are certified under the Homeland Security Presidential



Directive (HSPD-12) and the General Services Administration's FIPS 201 evaluation program.

"Obviously, system compatibility, accuracy and reliability were our highest priorities," said Lieutenant Vincent Byrd, FCPD's project manager. "This solution provided a number of additional benefits. It is Windows based and functions like a PDA, so it was already familiar to officers. The units were also customized to touch screens so that officers don't need a stylus, which makes for one less thing to manage in the field."

Byrd points out that the biometric reader can scan left- or right-hand fingers with equal ease. The evaluation team also cited longer battery life and superior graphics clarity, which was important for photo identifications. For FCPD, the units were modified to work with Viisage facial recognition software to match photos in its database.

For example, someone detained on a misdemeanor without ID can be positively identified in about 30 seconds if he is in FCPD's system. If he is not, he can be released on a summons. That means that the officer isn't spending time and money transporting the detainee to and from holding and going through the booking process.

"This device not only improves our identification process, it also saves us time and therefore money," Byrd said. "This has the possibility to be the most effective tool for police since the two-way radio."

To date, Fairfax County has purchased 130 of the 2-pound terminals, which Fairfax and Montgomery counties and Washington, D.C. Metro police are currently using. Other NCR NOVARIS agencies and jurisdictions are expected to build the installation base through 2008 and beyond.

Debra Yemenijian is a public relations executive representing Datastrip Inc. with Schubert Communications. She can be reached at debray@schubert.com.