

CCTV system that can weed out the villains

By Tom Kelly

A CCTV camera that can detect potential criminals, then follow their movements, is being tested in shopping centres.

The £7,000 Bug is fitted with a ring of eight cameras which record a panoramic view of the street below.

The footage is scanned by software that identifies 50 behavioural traits and determine whether someone is acting out of the ordinary.

When a suspect is spotted, a ninth camera automatically locks on to them and follows their movements. The develop-

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ment means town centres can be monitored without the need for human CCTV operators.

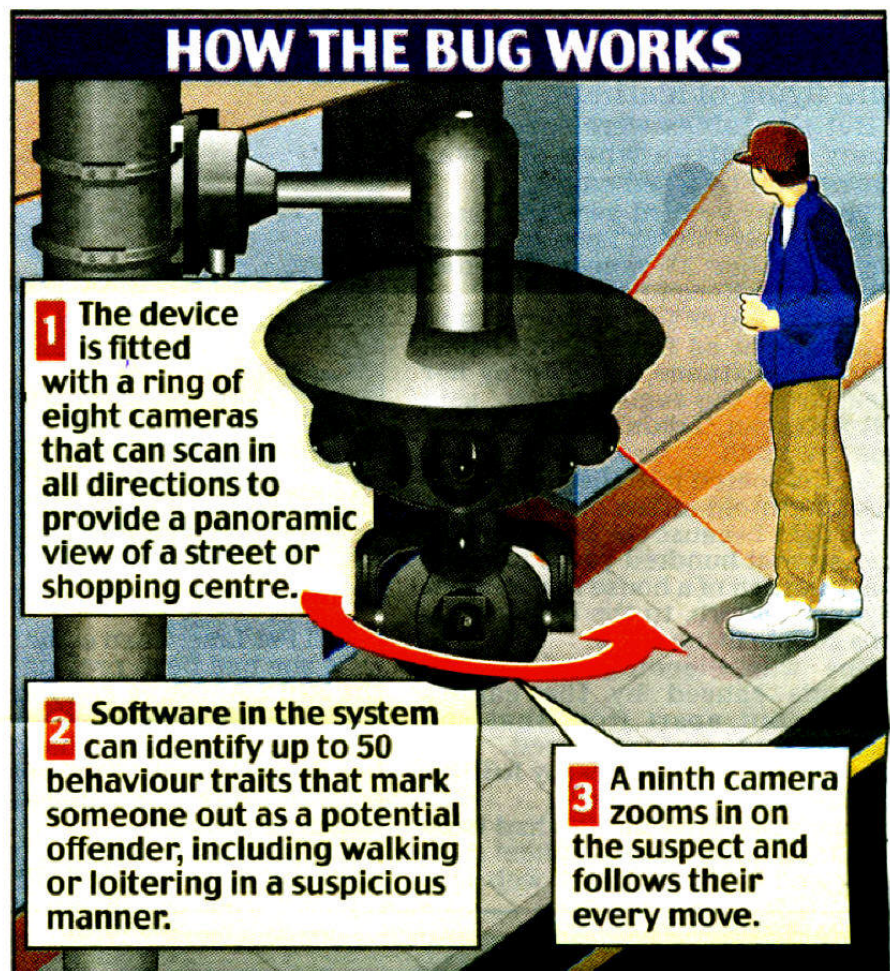
The camera has been tested in Luton for the last 18 months. Trials are due to start soon in Chester and Exeter.

Jason Butler, head of CCTV at Luton Council, explained: 'The camera picks up on unusual movement, zooms in on someone and gathers evidence from a face and clothing, acting as a 24-hour operator without someone having to be there.'

'We have kids with Asbos telling us they hate the thing because it follows them wherever they go.'

But civil liberty campaigners claim the cameras are another extension of state surveillance in what is already the world's most spied-upon country.

There are 4.2million CCTV cameras in Britain - a fifth of



the world's total. Simon Davies, director of Privacy International, which campaigns against a Big Brother state, said: 'We do not know what the psychological impact will be on the population.'

But Stuart Thompson, managing director of Viseum, the firm which developed the Bug, said the innocent had nothing to fear.

'It may mistake someone window-shopping for someone loitering, but on every occasion that a crime has been committed the system has always caught evidence,' he added.

Several police forces are considering using cameras attached to flying drones.

These can zoom in on and track a face from 500ft. This can then be matched against a database of criminals or suspects.

The Casper 250 has a wingspan of 8ft and a top speed of 50mph, but its electric motor makes it almost silent.

Police believe it could be used to monitor traffic and demonstrations as well as more sensitive operations such as tracking drug traffickers and terrorists.

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