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AN "intelligent" CCTV camera designed to predict when a person may be about to commit a crime is being tested in high streets and shopping centres.

The £7,000 device, nicknamed "the Bug", consists of a ring of eight cameras scanning in all directions. It uses software to detect whether anybody is walking or loitering in a way that marks them out from the crowd. A ninth camera then zooms in to follow them if it thinks they are behaving suspiciously.

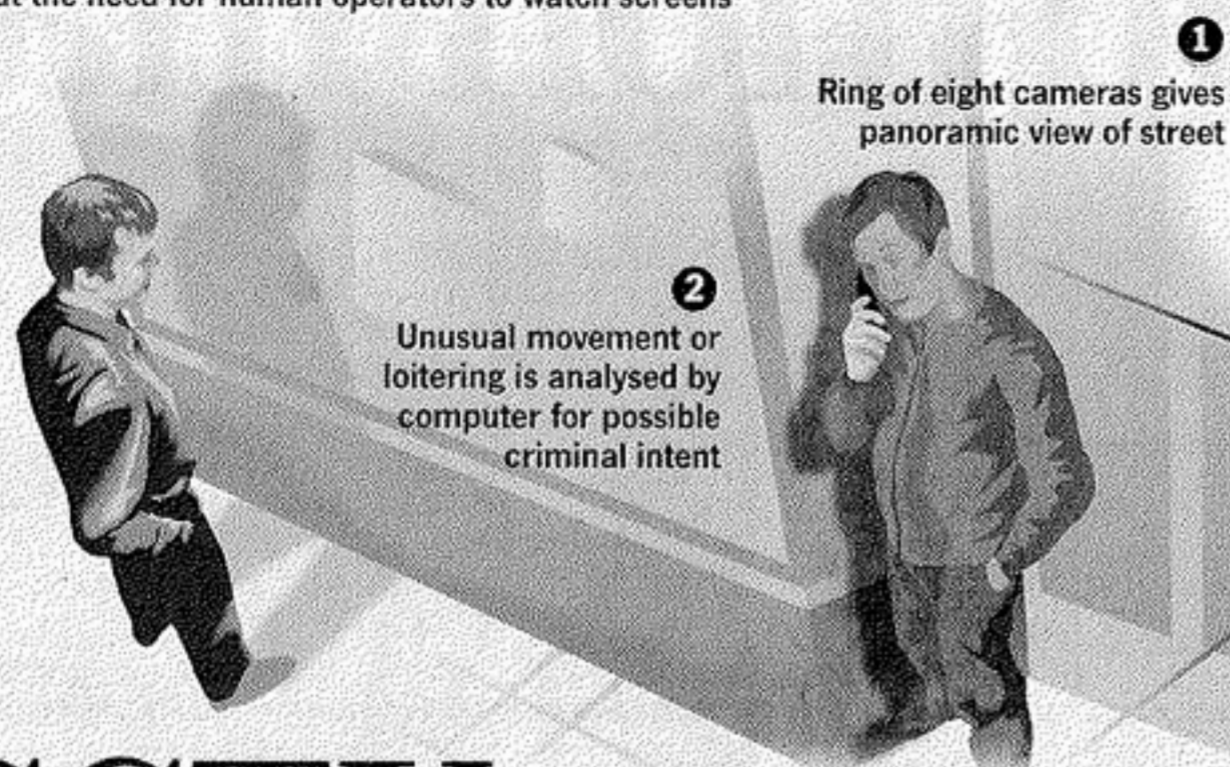
The Bug is the latest of a series of advances in CCTV beyond basic surveillance, and is being launched as new figures show that Britain is one of the most "spied upon" countries.

According to the information commissioner, there are now 4.2m cameras in Britain. New research by JP Freeman, a security consultancy based in Connecticut, shows that Germany, the country in Europe with the next highest number, has just 1.6m. The whole of western Europe excluding the UK has 6.5m.

Apart from America, the rest of the world combined has just 5m cameras.

The new technology includes "talking CCTV" – in which operators tell jobs to behave via speakers attached to the cameras. The Home Office-backed scheme is being extended nation-

The Bug monitors the area and follows potential offenders without the need for human operators to watch screens



CCTV camera 'tails' suspects

wide after successful trials in Middlesbrough.

Several police forces are now considering using cameras attached to unmanned drones originally designed for clients including the Israeli army. These will fly unseen and unheard above cities to spy on criminals and record numberplates.

At Loughborough University,

scientists are developing a computer program to identify criminals carrying hidden guns before they commit crimes. It analyses their movement and facial expressions.

"Intelligent CCTV will become the norm in the next decade," said Peter Fry, director of the CCTV User Group.

Concerns are growing, how-

ever, that surveillance has now gone far beyond what is justified by public safety. "I made a prediction 10 years ago that if we were not careful there would be no escaping the gaze of the lens. We have reached that stage," said Simon Davies, director of Privacy International. "We do not know what the psychological impact will be on the population."

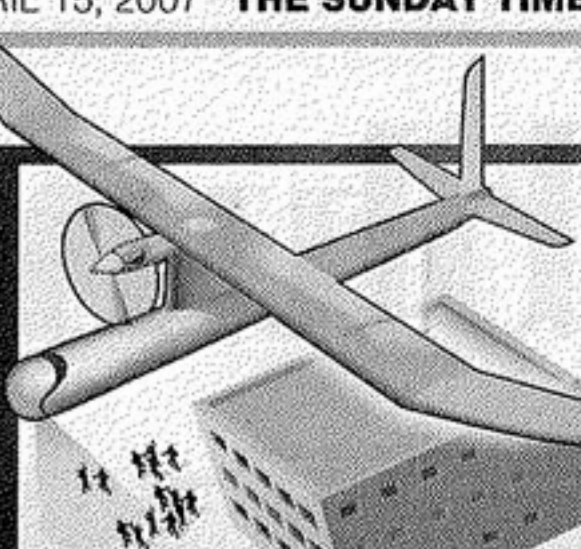
The Commons home affairs select committee has begun an inquiry and aims to propose ground rules for the use of CCTV by the police and other authorities.

The Bug, which has been tested for 18 months in Luton, sounds like a step towards the world portrayed in *Minority Report*, the 2002 film starring

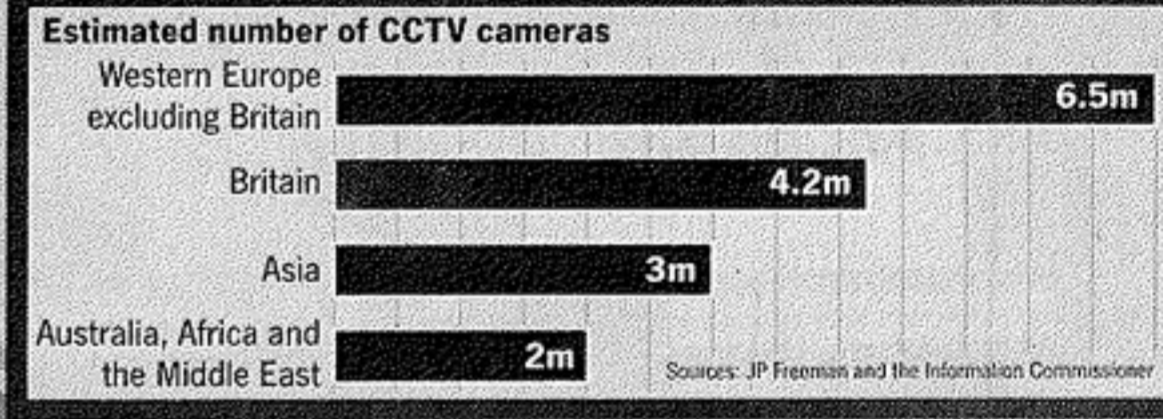
Tom Cruise, in which a police "department of pre-crime" arrests offenders on the basis of what they are about to do.

"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," said Jason Butler, head of CCTV

Drone Camera mounted on unmanned drone can lock-on to individual faces in a crowd helping police identify suspects



Talking CCTV System to be installed in 20 British towns and cities allows CCTV operators to give orders to jobs and vandals through loudspeakers



at Luton borough council. "We have kids with Asbos telling us they hate the thing because it follows them wherever they go."

The device has been developed by Viseum, a company based in Erith, Kent. The software linked to the cameras looks out for some 50 behaviour traits that could be suspicious.

Stuart Thompson, managing director of Viseum, conceded that the camera might zero in on an innocent member of the public, but he denied it was intrusive, claiming that 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 said.

Chester and Exeter city councils will be next to install the "intelligent" cameras.

Officers from the West Midlands and Greater Manchester police forces last week held talks with the British company developing the drone. The Casper

250, built by Top I Vision in Israel, has a wingspan of 8½ft and is powered by an electric engine, making it almost inaudible. It is made from lightweight plastics and carbon fibre. With a top speed of more than 50mph, it can be assembled in 15 minutes and is launched by the operator throwing it into the air.

The camera can lock on to and track a single face from 500ft above, which could then be scanned and matched against a database of known criminals or terrorist suspects. The Civil Aviation Authority is reviewing rules that prevent drones flying in most British airspace.

Chief Inspector Roger Hart of the specialist operations unit at Greater Manchester said it could be used for "routine matters" such as monitoring traffic, as well as more sensitive operations.

"Everybody would love to have the kit ready now," said Hart. "It could be used on demonstrations and marches, and would have semi-covert use for drugs purchasing and terrorism."