

Huachuca Biometrics Device Separates Friends from Foes

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A new mobile device is enabling US soldiers in Iraq to determine if individuals on the streets are civilians or insurgents, no matter what kind of clothing they wear or names they give.

Developed at the Fort Huachuca Intelligence Center in Arizona, the gadget uses biometrics to find out if an individual is listed in a database of wanted persons. By using a combination of fingerprinting, eye scans and facial-recognition software, the device can determine if an individual's biomarkers match with an individual in the database. The device then flashes either a green or red light, depending on whether the individual should be released or further investigated.

Huachuca researchers have spent the past 10 years working on the device, which is known as "Handheld Interagency Identity Detection Equipment" (HIIDE). Currently, soldiers are using about 7,000 HIIDES in Iraq, which cost about \$10,000 each. With the device, the military uploads the biomarkers of hundreds of individuals into the database weekly, finding about one insurgent per day on average. More than 1 million individuals - mostly Iraqis - are in the system.

The mobile HIIDE gadget builds on an earlier laptop version, which the Marines and Army have been using since the invasion of Iraq, building a database of individuals. The HIIDE, which weighs about 3 pounds, produces results almost instantly.

The device has played an important role in disabling bombing networks,

explains Kathy DeBolt, chief of Fort Huachuca's Language and Technology Office. For example, forensic technicians can match fingerprints found on bomb fragments to individuals using the HIIDE device. In one case, an individual discovered this way led officials to several other insurgents. The technology has forced insurgents to change their strategies, including forcing them to leave Baghdad.

In the future, the technology could prove useful for domestic purposes, as well. One possibility is using the HIIDE device for border security or national intelligence, although respecting civil rights would be a major concern before implementing such programs. Currently, it's illegal to keep such information on US citizens, unless the individual is a known terrorist.

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