

Police halt Google 'Street View' project in India

June 21 2011, by Naseeb Chand



The camera of a Google street-view car, used to photograph whole streets. Indian police say they have ordered Google to stop taking photos of the city of Bangalore for its Street View product because of fears the images could be used by militants.

Indian police said on Tuesday they had ordered Google to stop taking photos of the city of Bangalore for its Street View product because of fears the images could be used by militants.

Technology giant Google launched its plan to collect panoramic images of India last month, picking IT and software hub Bangalore as the starting point for the gigantic undertaking.

"Since Bangalore has been on the radar of terrorists and anti-national

elements as a high target area, we are wary of its streets and localities being filmed and made available on [Google Maps](#)," Bangalore additional [police](#) commissioner T. Sunil Kumar told AFP.

Kumar said Google would need written permission from the ministry of home affairs and the ministry of external affairs to continue filming. Neither ministry commented when contacted by AFP.

Google, which claimed it had received all the necessary authorisations from the state and [federal authorities](#) last month, said it had pulled its cars and tricycles with specially mounted cameras off the roads.

"We received a letter from Bangalore's commissioner of police and are reviewing it. We will not be collecting any more images for Street View until we speak to the police," a Google spokeswoman told AFP.

"We expect to have any issues sorted out soon."

Street View, which operates in more than 25 countries, has proved hugely popular with users since its launch in the United States in 2007, but it has also run into trouble with several governments concerned about privacy.

In March, France's data privacy regulator fined Google 100,000 euros (\$143,500) for collecting private information while compiling photographs for the project.

Last month the company said it would appeal against a Swiss ruling ordering it to ensure that all people and cars pictured on Street View were unrecognisable.

Google has also agreed to delete private emails and passwords mistakenly picked up from wireless networks in Britain by its Street

View cars.

Kumar said the Bangalore police were not against the project in principle, but the government would have to decide whether to allow it to proceed.

"The government has to assess the benefits and fallout of such a facility as technology can be misused or abused by anyone," he said.

"We need to study the whole exercise in consultation with our security agencies and take a call on it."

Google has agreed to consider requests from the government and law enforcement agencies to blur or block images in sensitive locations and has said it will blur images on request from property owners.

After the Mumbai attacks in 2008 in which 166 people were killed, a case was lodged in the Bombay High Court calling for Google Earth to be banned amid suggestions that the online satellite imaging was used in the planning of the atrocity.

Indian police were also put on alert after a key plotter of the attacks, US-Pakistani citizen David Headley, confessed to carrying out surveillance of the targets by taking pictures and drawing maps.

Ajai Sahni, executive director of the Institute of Conflict Management in New Delhi, told AFP that [Street View](#) had more privacy than security implications.

"The first instinct of banning it isn't very constructive. What [Google](#) has done is block places of significant security interest," he said.

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