

Berlin police mull crime-predicting software

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German police are considering using crime prediction software

Police in Berlin are considering deploying software that predicts crimes—and have even dubbed the project "Precobs" in a nod to a term used in "Minority Report", the US sci-film based on a similar premise.

Developed by a German firm, the software programme predicts when and where a crime is most likely to occur, based on different data. It is being tested by police in the southern state of Bavaria.

"The Berlin police is first waiting for the results of the trial run in Bavaria" before deciding on whether to acquire "Precobs", a spokesman told AFP in an email.

The name is a contraction of "Pre-Crime Observation System". The "Precobs" title borrows deliberately from the "precog" term used in "Minority Report" referring to psychics who predict crimes before they happened. That 2002 futuristic movie starring Tom Cruise and directed by Steven Spielberg was based on a story by Philip K. Dick.

The German "Precobs" system relies on data of the location, time and other details of past crimes such as home break-ins. When a new incident is reported, the [software](#) analyses the data to look for a pattern that will point to a future target.

It was developed by the Institute for pattern-based Prediction Technique in Oberhausen.

The initial results from tests on burglaries in the Bavarian cities of Munich and Nuremberg are "promising", the state's interior minister Joachim Herrmann said in a progress report last month.

But a civil rights activist voiced concern in Tuesday's Berliner Zeitung that personal data could eventually be used, instead of the currently anonymous information.

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