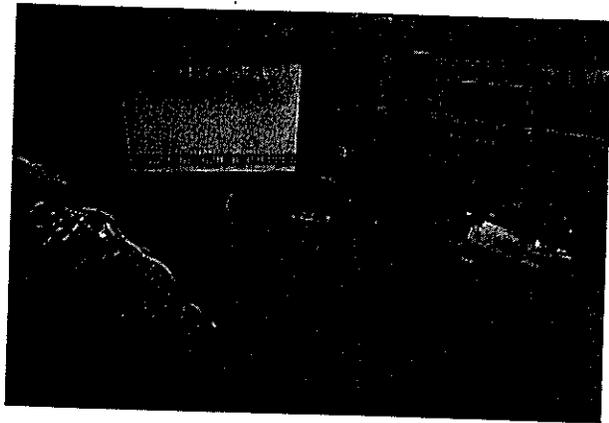


## *Video Cops-Selling Cameras Door to Door*

Captain Al Maroney  
Fresno Police Department

Imagine an officer sitting at a console in a dimly lit room whose attention is caught by a person who appears to be following the path of a young child. The officer focuses his attention to the person as the child turns a corner and the older male does the same. She alerts a nearby dispatcher to start a patrol unit to the area as she continues to observe the unfolding situation. How valuable is this "head start" law enforcement has been given by virtue of closed circuit television cameras



(CCTV)? What if the person was in the process of abducting the child? What if the person was a sex offender casing his prey? More importantly, what if the child was yours? CCTV has extraordinary potential in not only identifying predators who continue to terrorize and victimize our communities, but would serve as a deterrent to crime also.

For decades, law enforcement has been utilizing innovative technology to assist in reducing crime as well as to aid officers and civilian employees in completing their work more rapidly and efficiently. These technological advances include computer-aided dispatch, computers in patrol vehicles, forensic analysis and cameras in patrol cars that monitor the actions of the officer during traffic stops. If we can monitor police officer's actions during traffic stops, we certainly should consider monitoring the activity of

criminals as they prepare to commit illegal acts against innocent people in our neighborhoods. Closed Circuit Video Television (CCTV) surveillance cameras capture many of us as we venture throughout our daily tasks. They are silent, they don't attract our attention, and they never blink. The use of video cameras as a crime deterrent has been used in Great Britain since 1961 when black and white cameras were installed in the London Underground Railway system.

The use of video surveillance cameras in American public places has existed for many years. Every time you go to your bank, a gas station, the ATM machine and countless other commercial establishments, you are probably being captured on video. Using this application, however, in residential neighborhoods is an untested concept and not without its challenges. Certainly, some residents will view this as another effort of the government to intrude on their private lives. Undoubtedly, some will feel targeted because of their ethnicity or the race of criminals in their neighborhoods. Yet others will feel invaded by the possibility of cameras being directed into their backyards or private areas of their homes. But the fact is that they are already under the constant gaze of a myriad of video cameras as they engage in their normal daily activities. The average person leaves a continuous stream of electronic images on dozens of CCTV systems as they go about their daily lives.

The effectiveness of this technology for private business and its relevant benefit to our communities demonstrates its potential monumental significance for safety in our neighborhoods. If our city leaders across the country believe it can be another successful tool to prevent crime, the technology is readily available. One of the more significant

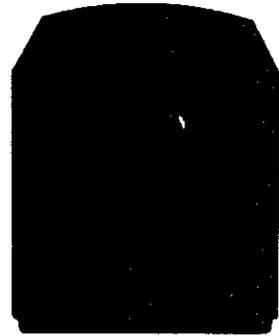
hurdles will be to garner the trust and confidence of their communities. For CCTV to become a reality in communities most affected by street crimes, the police will have to have gain their support and participation. The task of using video cameras in residential neighborhoods will be a matter of not only funding, but a task of obtaining social acceptance in those areas.

*“You used to watch TV. Now, it watches you.”*  
(Patton, 1995, 125)

#### Historical Perspective

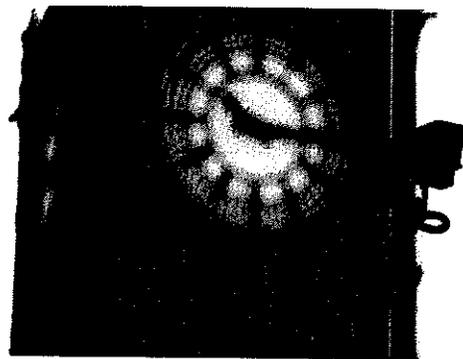
Video surveillance cameras are not new to our society and they have been increasingly used in everyday settings. Citizens are already unknowingly observed dozens of times every day in most commercial establishments. Putting cameras in the streets appears to be the next logical and reasonable application of this technology as an additional safety measure for our residents. Closed circuit television camera systems are commonplace in Europe, especially Britain. These cameras are viewed as a cost-effective measure to combat a wide range of urban issues from reducing crime to increasing the consumer and business confidence in public areas of towns and shopping centers.

These systems integrate state-of-the-art equipment with remarkable resolution and infrared nighttime capability. They record camera images to use in criminal prosecution and/or police investigations. The systems include sophisticated computer assisted



scanning operations, motion detection facilities and zoom features. They can often track an individual through town day or night from a single control room that creates a full profile of contacts and activities undertaken by the individual(s).

Britain has more CCTV systems specifically to monitor the behavior of its citizens in public places than any other capitalist nation. British police and politicians credit the use of video surveillance cameras as the primary solution for urban dysfunction. They also credit video monitoring technology for having more impact on the evolution of law enforcement than any other technology in the past two decades.<sup>1</sup> Originally installed around Britain to deter burglary, assault and car theft, most camera systems have been used to combat 'anti-social behavior', including many minor offenses such as littering, urinating in public, traffic violations, obstruction, drunkenness, and evading meters in parking lots.<sup>2</sup>



Surveillance cameras like this one in Westminster are a common sight on London's streets and in its subway system.

Crimes of all types have been impacted, from petty thievery to street muggings. Although there are no statistics to prove it, many serious incidents may well have been prevented by the simple presence of video cameras. Citizens there have grown accustomed to their use and may be filmed "unknowingly" up to 300 times per day by the estimated several thousand CCTV cameras in Britain.

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<sup>1</sup> Privacy International, page 6

<sup>2</sup> Privacy International, "CCTV Frequently asked Questions" 7/22/97

During the investigation into the attack on the Admiral Duncan pub (a gay bar in London) by a neo-nazi group in 1993, the police started by collecting all of the video recordings made in the area. The investigators spotted a subject with a blue duffel bag like the one they knew the bomb was in. Shortly afterwards, they saw the same man *without* the blue bag. Investigators then accessed London Underground Railway cameras and found the same man and were able to get a high-definition shot of his face. The camera shot was broadcast on national television and the suspect was identified and prosecuted. The same surveillance systems, common in London's rail system, are also providing identifying information on those responsible for the recent bombing attacks there in July 2005. Images have been released showing whom they believe are involved in that city's worst terrorist attack.

In the United States, the City of Los Angeles is undertaking this effort with little public debate. Cameras will soon focus their eyes on one of the world's most famous streets, Hollywood Boulevard, and there are plans for 64 more on Hollywood, Santa Monica and Sunset Boulevards as well as Western Avenue. The initial five cameras for Hollywood Boulevard are estimated to cost \$103,000 for the equipment and \$25,000 annually to maintain them. An additional fourteen cameras will be bought from grant funds secured by one of the City's Council members.

As with most emerging technologies, costs decrease rapidly and these figures may be overstated at this time. The Hollywood area cameras are the beginning of what some city officials hope will be a wave of virtual law enforcement that will help the understaffed

LAPD investigate and deter crime from the San Fernando Valley to South Los Angeles.<sup>3</sup> The Los Angeles Police Department will have to add personnel to monitor the cameras which can pan, tilt, and zoom by the use of a joystick controlled by an officer and are capable of seeing every inch of a city block. Costs for these employees are not factored into the purchase price of the CCTV systems; however, they may be a “force multiplier” by allowing LAPD to reallocate personnel based on the presence of the cameras. Police will also have the capability of searching recordings that are digitally stored, possibly creating a scenario where detectives rely on visual evidence to shorten the time it will take them to solve crimes, thus freeing them for other cases.

Other jurisdictions are moving in directions similar to that seen in Los Angeles. Consider these recent developments across the nation:

- Chicago now has at least 2,000 surveillance cameras across its neighborhoods, after leaders last year launched an ambitious project at a cost of roughly \$5 million. Law enforcement says the cameras have helped drive crime rates to the lowest they've seen in 40 years.
- In Philadelphia, where the city has increasingly relied on video surveillance, cameras caught an early morning murder which ultimately led to the capture of a suspect. Police say the accused is now a suspect in an unsolved murder from 1998.
- Homeland Security officials last week announced they would install hundreds of surveillance cameras and sensors on a rail line near the Capitol at a cost of \$9.8

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<sup>3</sup> Cameras to Keep Watch in Hollywood, LA Times, October 28, 2004, pg. A1

million, months after an effort by local officials to ban hazardous shipments on the line.<sup>4</sup>

Pressure is building for greater use of video cameras to keep watch over our nation's cities, particularly in transportation systems and other spots vulnerable to terrorism after the bombings in London. This technology could serve not only as an integral part of our national security, but would serve to make our neighborhoods safer places for our children to dodge balls, not bullets.

CCTV systems could provide a tremendous benefit to all, especially in communities where mistrust in the police or fear of retaliation hampers the law-abiding citizens' overall quality-of-life. Many of our inner city neighborhoods are plagued by drive-up drug sales, graffiti and violence such as drive-by shootings. With the constant improvements and evolution of technology today, we should make every effort to expand our defensible space in the war on crime. For example, there are more than 200 cameras in Baltimore, and there are 20 to 25 police cameras in Washington in addition to a network in their Metro subway stations, trains and buses, according to EPIC, a Washington-based civil liberties research center. New York City has a burgeoning network, and there are also cameras in New Orleans and on transportation systems around the country, but analysts say there is neither the depth nor coordination of coverage that there is in Britain.<sup>5</sup> What they all share in common, though, is a community desire to create a better quality of life through the creation of monitored defensible space.

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<sup>4</sup> Robert Tanner, AP National Writer, The associated Press July 23, 2005

<sup>5</sup> EPIC, 2005

## Defensible Space for Public Safety

“Defensible space” commonly refers to architectural and environmental design used to reduce criminality by increasing field of observation and ownership.<sup>6</sup> When space is used in such a way that makes people feel safe and secure in the community, it fosters the likelihood for increased social interactions – a primary source of crime deterrence.

Techniques, such as lighting, fencing, and landscaping, can define spaces in a manner that promotes community safety by decreasing criminal activity.

The idea of "defensible space" conjures up a variety of different images for people. Some people tend to assume that defensible space implies brick walls, barred windows, and high fences which inevitably segregate people from their community. However, defensible space actually can be applied to unify and build a better community.

Ideally, space should create a sense of territoriality or a feeling of control over personal property and the space around it. According to Oscar Newman, author of *Defensible Space- Crime Prevention through Urban Design*, defensible space must contain two components:

- First, defensible space should allow people to see and be seen continuously. Ultimately, this diminishes residents fear because they know that a potential offender can easily be observed, identified, and consequently, apprehended.
- Second, people must be willing to intervene or report crime when it occurs. By increasing the sense of security in settings where people live and work, it encourages people to take control of the areas and assume a role of ownership.

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<sup>6</sup> A Defensible Space Project: Detering Crime and Building Community in Rogers Park, Loyola University, May, 1997

When people feel safe in their neighborhood they are more likely to interact with one another and intervene when crime occurs. In short, the community is the first line of defense for crime control.<sup>7</sup>

Although defensible space is not a cure-all, it is a good starting point to facilitate social interaction and prevent crime in communities. When strategies of defensible space are used in conjunction with other programs, such as community policing and neighborhood watches, they can have long lasting effects. This hypothesis is supported by research by the National Institute of Justice, which concluded that crime falls from a combination of defensible space strategies *and* community policing. Community policing makes police more visible and familiar to residents and with the physical environment of their beats, thus reinforcing the efforts of police-citizen partnerships to curtail crime. By using formal social controls of the police to strengthen informal social controls of the community, urban safety problems can be more readily managed.<sup>8</sup>

This returns us to the question - how can law enforcement successfully work with more resistant community members who may view the concept of public cameras as a crime deterrent as another means of government intrusiveness? If cities desire to implement public cameras, then it would behoove them to collaborate with the community as they have in the past and utilize their Citizen Advisory Boards, churches, Neighborhood Watch and other key community groups to aid in the buy-in of this new crime prevention tool.

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid

<sup>8</sup> A Defensible Space Project: Deterring Crime and Building Community in Rogers Park, Loyola University, May, 1997

*The natural progress of things is for liberty to yield and government to gain ground-* Thomas Jefferson

Community Buy-In

Being monitored is almost a non-issue when citizens walk into a bank or other business. There is a common expectation that the store or location has some kind of surveillance system in operation. The common thought is the business is doing it for the protection of customers and to enhance safety while conducting business in the locale. There are few (if any) concerns for any potential violations of one's civil rights or any other Fourth Amendment issues in these instances, so placing CCTV in other areas may not necessarily be seen as intrusive as long as the government works in partnership with those affected to ensure they see the advantages of using CCTV in a manner that will benefit them.

Certainly, there may be opposition to cameras in residential neighborhoods that an agency should be prepared to address. Some may say these cameras would be an over-extension of law enforcement's need to ensure safe neighborhoods. Others might suggest that the police should simply resort back to the age-old concept of having officers walking their beats in high-crime areas as an alternative. This long - forgotten habit has all but vanquished except for high-concentration areas such as shopping malls or downtown district.

Another issue that may arise is the prosecution of certain cases based on what the video surveillance cameras record. Residents may question the use of recording their daily

lives for court-related purposes, which would certainly affect how the cameras would be accepted. Some may feel that police could falsely accuse someone based on the images preserved in this manner. A related concern may be the erosion of public willingness to come forward to provide testimony under the belief that the crime would already have been captured on video

*The turtle makes progress only when he sticks his neck out*  
James Conant

### Transition Planning

As law enforcement has demonstrated so well in the past, when they bring their community together to explore and analyze a new policing strategy, they will not only gain valuable insight, but it gives them an ideal opportunity to present their view and be more persuasive. Agencies certainly would be remiss if they did not have community gatherings for the specific purpose of placing the project “in the open” and actively seeking residents to advise them of the project and to share any concerns or questions. The focus group to discuss the pros and cons of using public cameras should include church leaders, representatives from local non-profit organizations, businesses, elected officials, police managers, and key community advocates for safety and crime prevention efforts.

*Progress comes from the intelligent use of experience*-Elbert Hubbard

### Conclusion

We will always have victims and locations where crime is more prolific. The causes of crime have been studied for years, and are generally thought to be poverty, decaying inner cities, and persons willing to take the risks associated with criminality. Ideally, we should not have to accept a decline in our quality of life based on what part of town we live in. Video surveillance cameras may be a viable alternative to increasing the risk of apprehension and diminish the victimization rate in the higher crime neighborhoods.

Can CCTV's eliminate crime? The answer is probably not. What CCTVs will ultimately do is reduce, if not remove, the *opportunity* to commit crimes. Although there is not a firm pool of statistics in the United States to show that cameras would definitively reduce crime, Strathclyde police in Scotland recently claimed a 75 per cent drop in crime following the installation of a closed circuit TV system in a city there.<sup>9</sup> Officials there believe this is because CCTV deters 'opportunistic' crime, where people take advantage of a situation on the spur of the moment. Phillip Edwards from the Home Office Crime Prevention Unit says the government is using CCTV as part of a long term plan to reduce overall crime. "Today's opportunist is tomorrow's professional criminal. If we decrease the number of opportunities for easy crime, we can reduce the number of people becoming professional criminals".

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<sup>9</sup> Privacy International, July 15, 2005

The crime triangle theory is a basic, yet powerful concept that drives crime and criminality. The "crime triangle" is a policing theory that identifies the three elements of victimization: (1) there must be a victim, (2) there must be a location, and (3) ~~that~~ there must be an offender who is provided with the opportunity to complete the illegal act<sup>10</sup>.

Addressing the opportunities as well as instilling the distinct fear of apprehension is greatly enhanced by increasing the most visible deterrent to crime - a uniformed officer. Adding personnel may no longer be law enforcement's only solutions to the changing needs of our society. Utilizing effective technological tools will perhaps become the norm to help police officers work smarter and more efficiently.

Police agencies should take advantage of this technology and use it in combination with other crime prevention measures to impact the predators of our society who feel that they can act with impunity. Our criminal justice system would have an additional reliable tool to employ in our war on crime if these cameras offered "who they are" in a manner that would satisfy both the evidentiary concerns of the courts and desire of all residents to have an opportunity to feel safe in their homes as well as in their communities.

The evidence points strongly that the adoption of CCTV's in our cities would provide a much needed avenue to address the growing issues of our society dealing with criminality. This "new age" officer will be small compact, weatherproof - and will never blink.

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<sup>10</sup> John Eck (2003) Police Problems: The Complexity of Problem Theory, Research and Evaluation