



FBI Hunting For The Ultimate AI Fingerprint Identification System

The standout phrase is: “the FBI said it wants everyone to be identifiable in the NGI System.” All intel units under the Director of National Intelligence (DNI) have the same philosophy.” Data and identification are the lifeblood of Technocracy. □ TN Editor

Any criminal worth their salt knows to wipe their crime scene for fingerprints, but some go a step further and try to erase the prints from their fingers entirely.

For decades, the practice of altering fingerprints has helped wrongdoers evade the law, but today the FBI thinks artificial intelligence could help catch those especially ambitious offenders.

The bureau on Friday asked the tech industry to weigh in on how AI tools could detect altered fingerprints and match them to their unaltered counterparts in the Next Generation Identification System, the FBI’s

massive biometric database.

“The [Criminal Justice Information Services] Division has identified a growing trend in which criminals intentionally alter their fingerprints to defeat identification within the NGI System,” officials wrote in [a request for information](#). “As those who seek to avoid identification continue to evolve their alteration techniques, it is critical that the NGI System maintain pace through the ability to learn in real time.”

The explanations behind altered fingerprints are as varied as the prints themselves, and not all are rooted in illegal intentions. Criminals might mask their identities using acid, surgery or a number of other techniques, but frequent contact with chemicals and rough surfaces, as well as certain diseases and medical treatments, could also unintentionally change fingerprints.

But whatever the cause, the FBI said it wants everyone to be identifiable in the NGI System.

Officials requested potential vendors detail the applications and real-time learning capabilities of their artificial intelligence platform and describe ways it could automate the biometric identification process. After assessing the different technologies, the FBI will select groups to prototype a system that can “distinguish [a] normal fingerprint pattern from an irregular pattern,” according to the RFI.

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Udi Greenberg: ‘The Obama Administration Was Defined By Technocracy’

This is a portion of an interview in Spiked Review. Again, Technocracy is front and center as the dominant theme in progressive and left-wing memes. Although there are similarities, it is Technocracy, not Fascism. Technocracy will continue to rise in public discussion. □ TN Editor

This does not mean to say that everyone who invokes the Weimar or Nazi analogy immediately ends up an anti-democrat, but Professor Bessner and me worry that we could eventually end up in a similar place. We are both scholars of the Cold War, and we both studied how political theorists in the 1940s and 1950s claimed that in order to achieve stable democracy you need to limit political activism and people’s involvement in politics. And we were worried that the same logic might lead us in the same direction today.

In our view, the right, progressive response to the contemporary moment should be a doubling down in our commitment to democracy, limiting technocracy and increasing democratic and grassroots involvement in politics.

review: Yet it does seem that the predominant response to the populist moment, certainly in left-wing and liberal circles in both the US and the UK, has been to make a stronger appeal to technocracy, to a rule by expertise.

Greenberg: That is true for some, certainly. It has actually been developing since at least the 1990s, with the so-called left moving more and more in the direction of technocracy, and trying to achieve progress through technocracy, rather than through more popular control of the economy. And I think that is born of a deep disappointment with the masses, and a belief that the masses cannot be trusted to make the right economic decisions. And that tendency developed and deepened right through to the Obama administration, which was very much defined by technocracy.

The reason this recent development on the left stood out for us was that too many on the left today make the same argument as the militant democrats - both contend that technocracy is the best means to preserve democracy. So, if the masses are not to be trusted, then you have to transfer as much power as possible into the hands of technocrats, who know what's good for the masses, who will make the right call. And you have to shield technocrats from democratic accountability precisely to make those calls.

We have seen this logic operating in the past two decades among centrist politicians, and political elites more generally. And we were worried that the rise of populism on the right will further exacerbate and intensify this technocratic way of thinking. We believe that the left should adopt a very different model of thinking. In some ways, we believe that the logic of militant democracy and technocracy is precisely what led us to where we are now.

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Washington Post: Silicon Valley Marches To Technocracy, Not Democracy

Must-read article - This writer hits the nail squarely on the head: "Technocratic ethos appears to have reemerged as the dominant response to concerns as diverse as fake news, data privacy and smartphone addiction."

At first glance, it looks to be any other Fourth of July parade in the faded Kodachrome photos. That is, until subtle details begin to pop: the uniformed marchers handing out pamphlets, the yin-yang emblem adorning banners, the fleet of identical gray automobiles driving in slow procession. "Operation Golden Gate" was the name of a 1948 plan among the followers of a political movement known as Technocracy Inc. to converge on the San Francisco Bay area. These self-described Technocrats gathered from around the country to educate the public in their central belief: that politicians lacked the ability to effectively

manage the complexities of the modern world and that the public should delegate decision-making instead to a small group of technological experts.

Some of the Technocrats' more fanciful proposals included a 16-hour workweek, equal income for all in the form of energy certificates, and the unification of North and Central American nations into the Technate of America. But Technocracy's iconography — its militaristic marches, insignia, uniforms and salutes — wasn't about to win any hearts soon after the defeat of fascism in Europe. The 1948 parade through San Francisco, Palo Alto, Santa Clara and San Jose was one of the final public displays of this obscure techno-utopianism that was soon to fizzle out. The Technocrats packed up their cars and headed home after their parade to what would soon be called Silicon Valley.

There, after years of dormancy, the Technocratic ethos appears to have reemerged as the dominant response to concerns as diverse as fake news, data privacy and smartphone addiction. As public grievances mount against the few tech companies determining how we connect with and understand the world around us, concrete proposals for action are coming from those companies themselves, rather than from lawmakers. In the absence of a functioning regulatory apparatus in the United States, Silicon Valley is stepping in to police itself, as if restoring trust in the public sphere were any other kind of scheduled maintenance.

Technocracy Inc. promoted a philosophy that required treating the public as passive users rather than active citizens, and so far, the solutions put forward by the tech industry have taken a similar approach. As a nation trying to understand what has become of democratic consensus in an age of increasing fragmentation, this anti-democratic approach is precisely the opposite of what we need.

Politicians, for their part, have been vocal about tech industry overreach. In the wake of revelations about [Cambridge Analytica](#), Facebook's data sharing and election hacking, governments around the world are holding hearings on social media and user privacy protections. The coming months will surely see a slow-moving clash between the ideals of representative government and the Technocratic vision of expert

management. But in many ways, it feels as if the Technocratic vision has already won.

While the European Union's General Data Protection Regulation recently caused countless sites with poor user protections to go dark across Europe, the legislation took six years to come to fruition. President Barack Obama's "[Consumer Privacy Bill of Rights](#)," also proposed in 2012, suffered attacks on all sides and never left the drawing board. More recently, April's Facebook hearings on Capitol Hill have resulted in [two overlapping pieces of legislation](#). But it's unlikely that either will get traction in a dysfunctional Congress, especially as [politicians joke](#) that they can understand only half of what they hear during tech hearings.

Meanwhile, as the public begins to fall out of love with its gadgets, Silicon Valley is rushing to make amends. Former engineers and investors have formed the [Center for Humane Technology](#) to "reverse the digital attention crisis." The San Francisco-based nonprofit [Common Sense Media](#) has been airing a public service ad campaign called "[Truth About Tech](#)." Even Facebook has been so willing to humble itself that it modified News Feed to promote "more meaningful social interactions" — and as a result is seeing the first-ever drop in time spent on the now slightly less addictive platform.

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China's New AI: Rumor Mongers Will Be Headed Straight To Prison

Spreading 'online rumors' that violate Beijing's official 'truth' can get you 7 years in jail, and everybody is turned into a rat to tattle on their friends. China asserts that "Rumors violate individual rights; rumors create social panic; rumors cause fluctuations in the stock markets; rumors impact normal business operations; rumors blatantly attack revolutionary martyrs." □ TN Editor

China has launched a platform, which includes a mobile app, that lets the public report "online rumours" and even uses artificial intelligence to identify reports that are false, as Beijing cracks down on what it views as socially destabilising content.

The platform, launched on Wednesday, comes as Beijing steps up efforts to police the internet, especially social media used by people to discuss politics and other sensitive subjects, despite stringent censorship.

Besides a website, the platform Piyao - which means “refuting rumours” - also has a mobile app and social media accounts with social media giants Weibo and WeChat.

Via those channels, Piyao will broadcast “real” news, sourcing reports from state-owned media, party-controlled local newspapers, and various government agencies.

“Rumours violate individual rights; rumours create social panic; rumours cause fluctuations in the stock markets; rumours impact normal business operations; rumours blatantly attack revolutionary martyrs,” Piyao said in a promotional video of the launch on its website.

Official data show internet regulators received 6.7 million reports of illegal and false information in July, with most of the cases coming from Sina that owns Weibo, Tencent which owns Wechat, Baidu, and Alibaba.

Chinese laws dictate that rumour-mongers could be charged with defamation, and they face up to seven years in prison. Online posts that contain rumours visited by 5,000 internet users or are reposted more than 500 times could also incur jail sentences.

Hosted by the Central Cyberspace Affairs Commission in affiliation with the official Xinhua news agency, Piyao has integrated over 40 local rumour-refuting platforms and uses artificial intelligence to identify rumours.

The platform operates under the guidance of 27 government departments, including the Central Party School, which trains rising officials, and powerful planning body the National Development and Reform Commission.

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Autonomous Airships Set To Revolutionize Policing, Emergency Services

The Technocrat police state is advancing with the invention of a camera laden blimp to fly over cities looking for evil-doers and spying on the remainder. Since they fly at low altitudes, their high-resolution cameras will be able to see the blades of grass in your lawn. Equipped with AI and 5G, they will be able to fully integrate into Smart City sensors to provide a real-time analysis of what is taking place on the ground. □ TN Editor

And these 'eyes in the skies' are reportedly on trial in cities ranging from London to New York.

Developed by [Avalon Airships](#), the incredible zero emission EOS blimps use fully electric drivetrains, while their streamlined hybrid design allows them to travel silently at high speeds for long periods.

The ability to land on water allows these helium-filled leviathans to reach

even the most remote destinations in record time.

And the fully autonomous onboard technology allows the EOS to operate 24 hours a day with minimal downtime at low cost.

Multiple, high resolution camera arrays allow the police and rescue services even greater insight into on-the-ground situations.

The aircrafts are equipped with a remotely piloted drone, allowing them to give more direct aid in emergencies.



Land anywhere. Image: Avalon Airships

And autonomous flight has the additional advantage of being able to operate in conditions commonly considered too risky for piloted aircraft.

A range of storage compartments allow the drone to carry a wide range of medical and survival payloads.

With a range of 300 miles, the vehicle's impressive endurance allows it to work as a communications relay in disaster zones.

While designed to improve policing and other emergency services, they can easily be adapted for commercial use, with their flexible payload

capacity useful in areas such as freight, entertainment and farming.

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Your City Can't Become 'Smart' Without Proper Payment Infrastructure

The combination of Internet of Things and Fintech powered high-speed wireless communications of 5G will enable Smart Cities function as intended by Technocrat social engineers. Without any one of those three, Smart Cities would be a total flop. Thus, your local action in your own city could potentially have a huge impact on scuttling Technocracy. □
TN Editor

How tech-savvy is your city?

Ask this question to the average New York City resident and they'll probably respond enthusiastically. Home to "Silicon Alley," NYC has quickly grown into a high-growth technology center that rivals San Francisco in talent and tenacity.

But let's not get ahead of ourselves. The question wasn't about the tech companies that have made a city their home, but rather the use of technology by the city itself. Innovation is at the heart of urbanization and smart city growth, and one might be quick to assume that a city like New York would rank fairly high on the municipal IQ scale.

That is, of course, until you consider the Metropolitan Transportation Authority's (MTA) MetroCard.

[According to The Wall Street Journal](#), the MTA responds to more than 2,500 (often profanity-laced) tweets a day. One of the most popular irate tweet topics? The MetroCard. A thin, magstripe-enabled piece of plastic, the MetroCard has long been a necessary evil for NYC commuters. (Never mind the malfunctioning service kiosks, unknown card balances, and temperamental gates.)

Implemented as a replacement to traditional subway fares, the MetroCard's swipe technology has caused a laundry-list of issues for riders since its introduction back in the early 1990s. And while the MTA has [announced a new contactless system](#), the implementation will take upwards of six years — and, unlike other examples of transit systems in Japan and the United Kingdom, will still lack a bigger vision for a smarter city-wide system. That's because it will be missing solid payment infrastructure.

Using payment infrastructure to support intelligent urban development

It's unsurprising that efficiency and cost-cutting measures come as a result of improved payment infrastructure. But what if Suica, Octopus, Oyster — and yes, even the MetroCard — took things one step further and leveraged the anonymously aggregated data sets collected through their payment infrastructure to further drive urban design? Instead of building infrastructure and services based on estimates and projections, governments could tap into real-world purchasing information in order to improve services.

We know that mapping applications, search engines, and telecom

operators have been mining and monetizing user data for years. In fact, many cities have been purchasing data from private companies, such as Citymapper, in order to influence their urban planning. And while this third-party data is useful, imagine what a city could do with its own hyperlocal datasets, mined directly from the usage of actual citizens. Faster, cheaper and more efficient transit, sure, but that would just be the start. Using payment infrastructure as the underpinning for both public and private developments could help ensure more effective application of city funds, private investments, and community-led initiatives.

Payment infrastructure in the U.S. and everywhere else is evolving at a rapid pace. We pay with our smartwatches, merchants accept cards on mobile phones, and everyone is accustomed to the idea of requesting a ride or ordering food while the payment happens in the background. Still, few global metropolises have truly embraced the speed of innovation, and there needs to be a change in strategy.

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Robot Strawberry Pickers To Prove That Humans Are Not Needed

Technocrats build because they can and because they are driven to do so. All problems have a scientific solution and there are innumerable problems to keep them employed. However, the social and ethical problems raised are not their concern, so they just keep on inventing. □
TN Editor

Experts are developing a robot to replace human strawberry pickers as farms struggle to find workers due to [Brexit](#).

Around 20 per cent of soft fruits are going to waste due to a shortage of workers, University of Essex researchers say.

This will worsen when Britain leaves the EU, scientist claim, which has led to farms looking for alternate solutions to harvest crops.

Dr Vishuu Mohan a computer science and engineering lecturer who is leading the project, said: 'The challenge is that no two berries are the same - they come in different shapes, sizes, order of ripeness and many are hidden in the foliage.

'Also the environment keeps changing constantly - sunny, windy, rainy - in contrast to a typical industrial environment.

'Hence, dextrous manipulation in unstructured environments is a big challenge for robotics today.'

The demand for strawberries has skyrocketed over the last 22 years with Britons consuming 101,000 tonnes yearly- up from 67,000 in 1996.

In 2015, the soft fruit industry employed 29,000 seasonal workers.

But by 2020 the seasonal worker requirement for UK soft fruit production will increase to 31,000, it is forecast.

A survey by the National Farmers Union shows that last year there was a 12.5 per cent shortfall of seasonal workers required to work on horticulture farms

Dr Mohan's team is looking at how robots can work in natural, unstructured environments where they can pick, inspect and pack fruits.

He hopes that the robots will be able to work alongside humans in a farm environment and also help reduce production costs.

He added: 'Skilled humans find it effortless, but when we try to build a system which does the same thing it is a complex, integration of vision, touch, force and movement and on top of it the ability to learn and adapt - which is the only way to deal with any changing, unstructured environment.'

The university is also working alongside farmers and jam makers Tiptree to complete a prototype of the robot.

Andrey Ivanov, manager of Wilkin and Sons farm in Essex, said: 'It could take years, or it could be just six months.'

'Robots can help in many industries for repetitive work on a production line, but with strawberries, they have to overcome changing conditions throughout the day - and they have to first be able to find the berry in the plant.

'Fruit picking may seem a simple task but picking the fruit without touching the berry will be a challenge. We need to ensure that the fruit we grow always arrives with the customer in perfect condition.'

A prototype of the robot is expected to be ready within a few months and it is expected to be able to pick low hanging strawberries.

Researchers will then begin to work on bi-manual robotic coordination which will recreate how humans pick with two hands and will have active vision to help find berries hidden by foliage.

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Surprising Numbers Of Teens Refuse To Use Social Media

There is a natural backlash occurring with teens completely dropping out of social media because of the phoniness and pressure imposed by their peers. Thus far, Technocrat overlords of social media have had the advantage freshness while growing their user base. Those days may be over. □ TN Editor

For 17-year-old Mary Amanuel, from London, it happened in Tesco. “We were in year 7,” she remembers, “and my friend had made an [Instagram](#) account. As we were buying stuff, she was counting the amounts of likes she’d got on a post. ‘Oooh, 40 likes. 42 likes.’ I just thought: ‘This is ridiculous.’”

Isabelle, an 18-year-old student from Bedfordshire who doesn’t want to disclose her surname, turned against social media when her classmates became zombified. “Everyone switched off from conversation. It became: ‘Can I have your number to text you?’ Something got lost in terms of

speaking face to face. And I thought: 'I don't really want to be swept up in that.'" For 15-year-old Emily Sharp, from Staines in Surrey, watching bullying online was the final straw. "It wasn't nice. That deterred me from using it."

It is widely believed that young people are hopelessly devoted to social media. Teenagers, according to this stereotype, tweet, gram, Snap and scroll. But for every young person hunched over a screen, there are others for whom social media no longer holds such an allure. These teens are turning their backs on the technology - and there are more of them than you might think.

While many of us have been engrossed in the Instagram lives of our co-workers and peers, a backlash among young people has been quietly boiling. One 2017 survey of British schoolchildren found that 63% would be happy if social media had never been invented. Another survey of 9,000 internet users from the research firm [Ampere Analysis](#) found that people aged 18-24 had significantly changed their attitudes towards social media in the past two years. Whereas 66% of this demographic agreed with the statement "social media is important to me" in 2016, only 57% make this claim in 2018. As young people increasingly reject social media, older generations increasingly embrace it: among the 45-plus age bracket, the proportion who value social media has increased from 23% to 28% in the past year, according to Ampere's data.

This is part of a wider trend. According to a study by US marketing firm Hill Holliday of Generation Z - people born after 1995 - half of those surveyed stated they had quit or were considering quitting at least one social media platform. When it comes to Gen Z's relationship to social media, "significant cracks are beginning to show", says the firm's Lesley Bielby.

She believes we will definitely see an increase in younger people quitting or substantially reducing their use. "And as younger Gen Zers notice this behaviour among their older siblings and friends, they too will start to dial down their use of social media."

As the first generation to grow up online, Gen Z never had to learn social

media, or at least not exactly. They glided through every iteration: Facebook (2004), Twitter (2006), Instagram (2010) [Snapchat](#) (2011) in real time, effortlessly adopting each one. But a life lived in pixels from your earliest age is no easy thing.

“You start doing things that are dishonest,” says Amanuel, who quit social media aged 16. “Like Instagram: I was presenting this dishonest version of myself, on a platform where most people were presenting dishonest versions of themselves.”

Like Amanuel, Jeremiah Johnson, 18, from Luton, grew weary of the pressures of sustaining an online persona. “It’s a competition for who can appear the happiest,” he says. “And if you’re not happy and want to vent about it on social media, you’re attention-seeking.”

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Facebook Employees Mount

Censorship Backlash Against Bosses

Non-leftists at Facebook are in a distinct minority but they are banding together to challenge Facebook's rampant censorship of conservative thought. These employees will face stiff peer pressure and possible retaliation for speaking up. Meanwhile, Facebook is being 'punished' by its users who are deleting their accounts en-masse. □ TN Editor

The post went up quietly on Facebook's internal message board last week. Titled "We Have a Problem With Political Diversity," it quickly took off inside the social network.

"We are a political monoculture that's intolerant of different views," Brian Amerige, a senior Facebook engineer, wrote in the post, which was obtained by The New York Times. "We claim to welcome all perspectives, but are quick to attack — often in mobs — anyone who presents a view that appears to be in opposition to left-leaning ideology."

Since the post went up, more than 100 Facebook employees have joined Mr. Amerige to form an online group called FB'ers for Political Diversity, according to two people who viewed the group's page and who were not authorized to speak publicly. The aim of the initiative, according to Mr. Amerige's memo, is to create a space for ideological diversity within the company.

The new group has upset other Facebook employees, who said its online posts were offensive to minorities. One engineer, who declined to be identified for fear of retaliation, said several people had lodged complaints with their managers about FB'ers for Political Diversity and were told that it had not broken any company rules.

Another employee said the group appeared to be constructive and inclusive of different political viewpoints. Mr. Amerige did not respond to requests for comment.

The activity is a rare sign of organized dissent within Facebook over the company's largely liberal workplace culture. While the new group is just

a sliver of Facebook's work force of more than 25,000, the company's workers have in the past appeared less inclined than their peers at other tech companies to challenge leadership, and most have been loyalists to its chief executive, Mark Zuckerberg.

But over the past two years, Facebook has undergone a series of crises, including the [spread of misinformation by Russians](#) on its platform and the mishandling of users' data. Facebook has also been accused of stifling conservative speech by President Trump and Senator Ted Cruz, Republican of Texas, among others. This month, the social network [barred the far-right conspiracy theorist Alex Jones](#), a move that critics seized on as further evidence that the company harbors an anti-conservative bias.

Within Facebook, several employees said, people have argued over the decisions to ban certain accounts while allowing others. At staff meetings, they said, some workers have repeatedly asked for more guidance on what content the company disallows, and why. Others have said Facebook, out of fear of being seen as biased, has let too many right-wing groups flourish on the site.

The dispute over employees' political ideology arose a week before Sheryl Sandberg, Facebook's chief operating officer, is scheduled to testify at a Senate hearing about social media manipulation in elections. A team helping Ms. Sandberg get ready for the hearing next Wednesday has warned her that some Republican lawmakers may raise questions about Facebook and biases, according to two people involved in the preparations.

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Autonomous Killer Robot Makes Debut Hunting Lionfish To Save Coral Reefs

While man-made global warming is always blamed for decay of the world's coral reefs, the lionfish has emerged as a co-conspirator. The Technocrat solution is to invent an autonomous AI killer robot to hunt and kill lionfish. If they can hunt and kill one species, can they not do the same for another (ie, humans) Other scientists are looking to use CRISPR technology to genetically edit coral. □ TN Editor

Usually animal preservation is a passive effort, creating protected zones or taking other measures to protect plants and animals from humans. But scientists and students at the Polytechnic Institute in Massachusetts want to help protect coral reefs from an invasive species in a more aggressive fashion: They're building a robot designed to autonomously hunt for and harvest [lionfish](#) threatening coral reefs.



Lionfish

Lionfish have threatened coral reefs off American and Caribbean coasts for years. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration [describes them](#) as “flexible predators potentially capable of reducing the abundance of a wide variety of native reef-associated fishes.”

Native to the Indo-Pacific and Middle East, lionfish have distinctive features which make them prized aquarium pets. After likely being dumped into the Atlantic by owners who no longer value them, their eggs have the Gulf Stream southbound to allowing them to become vicious predators amidst shrimp, small crabs, Nassau grouper and yellowtail snapper, just to name a few species who have come under attack.

Their style of attack is unique to their newfound waters. Lionfish have hollow bones in their dorsal and pectoral fins which they inject with toxins. Whipping their fins towards a target, NOAA estimates that they’ve created a diet of around 40 species.

That’s where the robots come in.

“The goal is to be able to toss the robot over the side of a boat and have it go down to the reef, plot out a course, and begin its search,” says Craig Putnam, a senior instructor in computer science at WPI, in a [press statement](#). “It needs to set up a search pattern and fly along the reef, and not run into it, while looking for the lionfish. The idea is that the robots could be part of the environmental solution.”

A fish-hunting robot has many complex requirements. When designing a robot to hunt one specific fish, getting the identification process right is crucial. The robotic hunter needs to be able to distinguish lionfish from other fish within the reef ecosystem to choose the right target. Ideally, coral reefs are busy and flourishing environments full of sight and sound. The robot needs to cut down a tremendous amount of noise to find its target.

That training comes from machine learning. The students at WPI showed their robot thousands of pictures of lionfish of different colors, taken from different angles and with varying lighting conditions, training it to recognize a lionfish with greater than 95 percent accuracy. The robot also got pictures of human divers in order to train it in what not to absolutely avoid shooting.

The robot will use a revolving carousel that WPI compares to the cylinder of a revolver, it will hold eight detachable spear tips. A motorized mechanism will thrust the spear's tip into the fish body. When this mechanized shaft retracts, it will leave the spear tip within the fish's body and the carousel will move on.

When operating with mechanized attack systems like this, buoyancy suffers. The WPI students working on the robot as a Major Qualifying Project (MQP) decided to compensate for this through a watertight, air-filled chamber that enlarges slightly after each spearing.

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