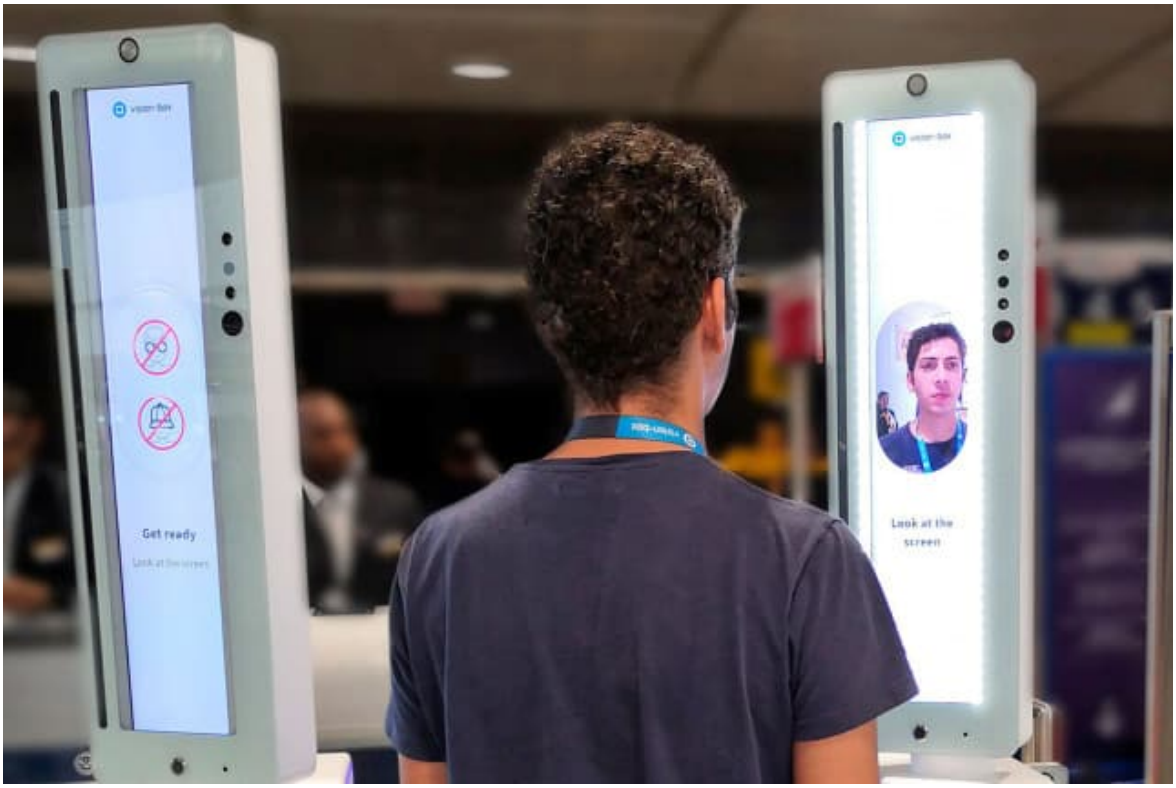

Spycraft Takes Ugly Turn With Facial Recognition Tech

Thanks to facial recognition at major travel points around the world, spies, aka ‘spooks’, can now use only a single identity in any given country. Once scanned under one identity, they are instantly identified if they show up with a different one. TN Editor

U.S. spies are no longer being tailed by foreign governments in about 30 different countries because advances in facial recognition, biometrics and artificial intelligence have made it almost impossible for the agents to hide.

Whereas governments would once physically follow CIA officers, facial recognition at airports and general CCTV surveillance in those countries makes it far easier to track people.

It comes as U.S. intelligence agencies face a growing crisis in intelligence gathering, as developments in technology are making it increasingly more difficult to protect operatives and mask their digital footprints.

In one attempt to tackle the crisis, the CIA created a multi-million dollar program called the Station of the Future, intelligence officials revealed to Yahoo News.

The program, created over the past decade, was run out of a diplomatic facility in Latin America and involved a team of spies trying to build tools and test techniques that could help the industry battle the digital age.

Intelligence officials told the outlet that the program eventually died off – only within the past few years – because of bureaucratic resistance and financial neglect.

Station of the Future was just one of several FBI and CIA-led programs created to try and tackle the digital threat to spies.

Duyane Norman, who is a former CIA official and the mastermind of the now-shuttered Station of the Future program, said: 'The foundations of the business of espionage have been shattered.

'We haven't acknowledged it organizationally within CIA, and some are still in denial. The debate is like the one surrounding climate change. Anyone who says otherwise just isn't looking at the facts.'

Officials say the efforts to address challenges brought by digital footprints, advances in biometrics and artificial intelligence continue to be a priority.

How home DNA tests could expose intelligence operatives

Just last week, the Pentagon ordered all military personnel to cease from using any consumer DNA testing kits because of security concerns.

The rise in popularity of the DNA kits, like the ones marketed by 23andMe and Ancestry, is considered to be one of the difficulties currently facing intelligence officials.

According to a memo co-signed by the Pentagon's top intelligence official, genetic information collected by the home-testing companies could leave employees open to 'personal and operational risks'.

‘These genetic tests are largely unregulated and could expose personal and genetic information, and potentially create unintended security consequences and increased risk to the joint force and mission,’ the memo read.

While military personnel have been ordered not to use the kits, officials say it is likely someone within their family already has.

Experts have previously warned that the creation of these DNA testing kits has made it easier to piece together a person’s identity.

They now warn that exposing a spy could be as easy as getting a saliva sample from a cup or cigarette to reveal if they are operating under a fake name.

Biometric data and advances in surveillance make it nearly impossible for agents to hide

The explosion of biometrics, including facial recognition and fingerprints, also poses a huge risk to the spy industry.

Given the advancements in biometric data at some airports, as well as border crossings, officials say it has become almost impossible for spies to have more than one identity within one country.

Stealing biometric databases has become a top priority for intelligence officials given how easily it can expose foreign undercover agents.

‘It’s extremely difficult now to run cover operations when so much is known and can be known about almost everybody,’ one former intelligence official said.

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