

Big Brother Really is Watching You

May 31, 2011 - Call it disturbing or just plain creepy, The Department of Homeland Security is trying to figure out what is on your mind. Specifically, they are trying to use computerized observations of members of the general public to determine if they pose a terrorist threat. But unlike traditional profiling - and make no mistake about it, what you are about to see is profiling - they appear ready to sweep just about everyone up as a potential target for privacy violations and see what actually sticks. Their goal is to predict your behavior before it actually happens. And they have even come up with one of their clever little acronyms by which they call the program.

Tweet

```
(function() {  
var s = document.createElement('SCRIPT'), s1 = document.getElementsByTagName('SCRIPT')[0];  
s.type = 'text/javascript';  
s.src = 'http://widgets.digg.com/buttons.js';  
s1.parentNode.insertBefore(s, s1);  
})();
```

Homeland Security is trying something it calls the Future Attributes Screening Technology (FAST). By "future attributes", they really mean future actions based on current behavior and biometric information. Their goal is to be able to look at a crowd of people and then target all of the potential terrorists based on things like their heart rate, what they are looking at, how frequently they are moving their eyes, etc. How they would get some of this information from a distance, I don't know. What I am willing to bet is that if they don't already have the technology, they're working on it.

The problem with such a system is that it is hardly foolproof. While I'll grant you that they may be looking for rogue terrorist bombers, they may be just as likely to find some young adolescent kid thinking about asking a girl out. Now, let's see if I can make that comparison stick?

A terrorist bomber is thinking about blowing himself up in a crowded mall. Stands to reason that he might have an elevated heart rate, be perspiring a bit much, be fidgety and have trouble maintaining eye contact. Now let's look at that same mall with a couple of teenagers. A guy sees a girl he thinks is very pretty and wants to ask her out. He approaches her. As he does so - you guessed it - he has an elevated heart rate, is perspiring a bit more than normal, is a little fidgety and is having trouble maintaining eye contact. What's even worse is that if you have a terrorist who is completely at peace with his decision, there may be no outward signs that he is planning something, but that poor kid just looking for a date is still going to face additional scrutiny.

Now, if you think this comparison is farfetched, just remember that Homeland Security is the same group that does airport screenings. These are the same people who have been filmed on numerous occasions giving intrusive pat-down searches to five year olds and grandmothers just trying to make it home for the holidays. There is absolutely no reason to believe that they will conduct searches using FAST with any more common sense than they have used at airports around the country.

The other thing to keep in mind is that FAST is nothing more than profiling. DHS wants you to think of it differently since proofing is politically incorrect and, if the wrong parameters are used, illegal. Instead of using something like skin color, they are just picking other parameters that have no apparent connection to race. But it doesn't matter what they call it

because the reality is that they are doing exactly the same thing that a profiler would do. Of course, since a computer is doing the work, absolutely no common sense will be applied before the computer spits out a result.

This morning, The Blaze published a piece on this same subject in which they compared FAST to the movie Minority Report. We think they got that right but would go even a little further and say that what DHS is doing here appears to threaten the very constitutional freedoms that they are sworn to protect.

The following video is the same one that ran on The Blaze this morning.

by Jim Malmberg

Note: When posting a comment, please sign-in first if you want a response. If you are not registered, [click here](#).

Registration is easy and free.

Follow me on Twitter: