Ron Paul's Worst Nightmare: FBI Nearing Completion of a $1 Billion Face Recognition Tracking Program to Spy

- Jake Horowitz

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For civil liberties and privacy experts, the FBI's new $1 billion state-of-the-art face recognition project is a worst nightmare scenario. The FBI has officially begun rolling out its Next Generation Identification (NGI) program, which will accumulate and archive information about every American.

The FBI first outlined the program in 2005, when they envisioned a new system to replace the fingerprint database that currently keeps track of citizens with criminal records. According to the FBI, "The NGI Program ... will either improve or expand existing biometric identification services ... to accommodate increased information processing and sharing demands in support of anti-terrorism."

According to an August 2006 document submitted to the Justice Department, "The NGI Program Office mission is to reduce terrorist and criminal activities by improving and expanding biometric identification and criminal history information services through research, evaluation and implementation of advanced technology within the IAFIS environment."

"As a result of the NGI initiatives, the FBI will be able to provide services to enhance interoperability between stakeholders at all levels of government, including local, state, federal, and international partners," said the agency.

In plain English, that means the government will be able to use a national database of images and link it to personally identifiable information in your records to track you down at will. According to reports, the FBI has already implemented the program in several places across America. As of July 2012, the FBI says it is "on scope, on schedule, on cost, and 60 percent deployed" in it's program.

The FBI estimates that it will be complete with installing the program in the United States by 2014.

This program represents an extreme disappointment to Ron Paul supports and libertarians, who have for years railed against profligate government spending on security, particularly the excess of the TSA and its expensive body scanners at America's airports. Ron Paul made this one of his core campaign issues throughout his 2012 campaign for president.

Several months back, *Cato Institute* scholar Jim Harper started a petition which explained why the TSA's policies are currently illegal. Discussing the new FBI program, Harper said that the FBI will use facial recognition software, along with public info available on your Facebook page, Twitter profile, and other social networks, in order to amass massive amounts of information about every American. Facial recognition "is more accurate with a Google or a Facebook, because they will have anywhere from a half-dozen to a dozen pictures of an individual, whereas I imagine the FBI has one or two mug shots.*"*

It's what privacy specialists have long been worried about: Facebook photos could serve as the basis for intelligence officials to track Americans.

The firm awarded in 2008 with the contract to implement this system is Lockheed Martin, which uncoincidentally, gives hudreds of thousands of dollars annually for lobbying efforts in Congress.