

15 August 2024

FOI Ref 16933

Request - You asked us the following:

1. Does your police force use
 - Predictive policing
 - AI assisted video analytics (such as the Fusus platform which uses AI to identify and alert police to specific items of clothing or unattended rucksacks)
 - Facial recognition (a specific form of AI assisted video analytics distinct from the above point)
2. If so, which company was each technology bought from
3. Are any of these technologies used to aid stop and search practices

We received your request on 06/06/2024 and have processed this under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).

Please find below our response. The following information has been provided relevant to the overt use of the data requested

Staffordshire Police holds the following requested information.

1. Does your police force use
 - Predictive policing – **Information held.**
 - AI assisted video analytics (such as the Fusus platform which uses AI to identify and alert police to specific items of clothing or unattended rucksacks) – **Information held.**
 - Facial recognition (a specific form of AI assisted video analytics distinct from the above point) – **Information held.**
2. If so, which company was each technology bought from – **Information held.**
3. Are any of these technologies used to aid stop and search practices – **Information held.**

Staffordshire Police discloses the following information.

1. Does your police force use
 - Predictive policing – **Disclosed – No.**
 - AI assisted video analytics (such as the Fusus platform which uses AI to identify and alert police to specific items of clothing or unattended rucksacks) – **Disclosed – No.**
 - Facial recognition (a specific form of AI assisted video analytics distinct from the above point) – **Disclosed – No.**

2. If so, which company was each technology bought from – **Disclosed – Not applicable.**
3. Are any of these technologies used to aid stop and search practices – **Disclosed – Not applicable.**

Staffordshire Police can neither confirm nor deny that it holds any further information relevant to this request as the duty in Section 1(1) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 does not apply by virtue of the following exemptions:

Any disclosure under FOI is a release to the public at large. Whilst not questioning the motives of the applicant, confirming or denying that any other information relating to the covert practise of facial recognition would show criminals what the capacity, tactical abilities and capabilities of the force are, allowing them to target specific areas of the UK to conduct their criminal/terrorist activities. Confirming or denying the specific circumstances in which the Police Service may or may not deploy covert facial recognition would lead to an increased risk of harm to covert investigations and compromise law enforcement. This would be to the detriment of providing an efficient policing service and a failure in providing a duty of care to all members of the public.

The threat from terrorism cannot be ignored. It is generally recognised that the international security landscape is increasingly complex and unpredictable. Since 2006, the UK Government has published the threat level: <https://www.mi5.gov.uk/threat-levels>. The UK continues to face a sustained threat from violent extremists and terrorists and based upon current intelligence the threat level is set at Substantial. It is well established that police forces use covert tactics and surveillance to gain intelligence in order to counteract criminal behaviour. It has been previously documented in the media that many terrorist incidents have been thwarted due to intelligence gained by these means.

Confirming or denying whether any information is or isn't held relating to covert facial recognition would limit operational capabilities as criminals, including terrorists would gain a greater understanding of the police's methods and techniques, enabling offenders to take steps to counter them. It may also suggest the limitations of police capabilities in this area, which may further encourage criminal/terrorist activity by exposing potential vulnerabilities. This detrimental effect is increased if the request is made to several different law enforcement bodies. In addition to the local criminal fraternity now being better informed, those intent on organised crime throughout the UK will be able to map where the use of certain tactics are or are not deployed. This can be useful information to those committing crimes. It would have the likelihood of identifying location-specific operations which would ultimately compromise police tactics, operations and future prosecutions as criminals could counteract the measures used against them. Any information identifying the focus of policing activity could be used to the advantage of terrorists or criminal organisations. Information that undermines the operational integrity of these activities will adversely affect public safety and have a negative impact on both National Security and Law Enforcement.

The following exemptions have been applied:

- Section 24(2) National Security
- Section 31(3) Law Enforcement

Section 24 and Section 31 are both qualified exemptions and as such there is a requirement to evidence any harm confirmation or denial that any other information is held as well as consider the public interest.

Public Interest Test

Section 24 - Factors favouring confirming or denying that any other information is held

Confirming or denying that any other information exists relevant to the request would lead to a better-informed public and the public are entitled to know how public funds are spent. The information simply relates to national security and disclosure would not actually harm it.

Section 24 - Factors against confirmation or denying that any other information is held

To confirm or deny whether Staffordshire Police hold any additional information would allow inferences to be made about the nature and extent of national security related activities which may or may not take place. This could enable terrorist groups to take steps to avoid detection, and as such, confirmation or denial would be damaging to national security. By confirming or denying any policing arrangements of this nature would render national security measures less effective. This would lead to the compromise of ongoing or future operations to protect the security or infra-structure on the UK and increase the risk of harm to the public.

Section 31 – Factors favouring confirming or denying that any other information is held

Confirming or denying whether any further information is held would allow the public to see where public funds have been spent and allow the Police service to appear more open and transparent.

Section 31 - Factors against confirmation or denying that any other information is held

By confirming or denying whether any further information is held would mean that law enforcement tactics would be compromised which would hinder the prevention and detection of crime. Security arrangements and tactics are re-used and have been monitored by criminal groups, fixated individuals and terrorists. These security arrangements and tactics would need to be reviewed which would require more resources and would add to the cost to the public purse.

Balance Test

The Police Service is charged with enforcing the law, preventing and detecting crime and protecting the communities we serve. The security of the country is of paramount importance and the Police Service will not divulge whether any other information is or is not held if to do so would place the safety of an individual at risk or undermine National Security. Whilst there is a public interest in the transparency of policing, providing assurance that the Police Service is appropriately and effectively engaging with the threat from criminals, there is a very strong public interest in safeguarding both National Security and the integrity of the police in knowing that policing activity is appropriate and balanced in matters of National Security; this will only be overridden in exceptional circumstances.



STAFFORDSHIRE
POLICE

If you are dissatisfied with the handling of your request, you have the right to ask for an internal review. Internal review requests should be submitted within two months of the date of receipt of this email and should be addressed to:

Next steps

You can ask us to review our response.

If you would like us to carry out a review of our response, please let us know within two months of the date of receipt of this email, review requests should be addressed to:

foi@staffordshire.police.uk

Or by Post to:

Central Disclosure Unit
Staffordshire Police HQ
PO Box 3167
Stafford
ST16 9JZ

Please remember to quote the reference number in any future communications.

Freedom of Information
Central Disclosure Unit