Community Support
Program

Frequently Asked Questions

1. **What does the CSP do?**

We support communities and law enforcement by helping to solve crimes that would otherwise go unsolved. The primary reason a crime goes unsolved is due to a lack of witnesses and leads to solving the case. We provide a persistent and unbiased witness to crimes.

2. **How does the CSP reduce crime?**

We work to reduce the crime rate in a city in two ways: increased deterrence and removal of repeat offenders early in their criminal careers.

      1. Increased Deterrence - The number one way we hope to decrease crime in the areas we support is by increasing the deterrence for people to commit crimes. The number one factor in deterrence is the perceived likelihood of getting caught and convicted. We and those we support would always rather deter a crime than have to solve it. By increasing the likelihood of the criminal getting caught, we hope to prevent the crime altogether.

      2. Removal of Repeat Offenders - There is a very small percentage of people in a community that commits a very large portion of the crimes. The average offender will commit 18 or more crimes before getting caught, many will commit hundreds of crimes. By increasing case clearance rates and removing career criminals sooner, communities become safer.

3. **What do you provide to investigators?**

We provide a high-level view of the crime scene, the cars and the number of people who were present at the scene, where those cars came from and where they went to, and their actions while going to and from the crime scene.

4. **Can CSP be used in court?**

Yes, the information we provide can be used in court. The information we provide is just one small part of court proceedings and it is combined with witnesses, forensic evidence, and other information to support search warrants and trials.

5. **What are the benefits of the technology?**

While we cannot identify people from our imagery, we can track suspects to and from crime scenes. Tracking a person from a crime scene to a car and then tracking a car to an address provides useful information to an investigator. We can also provide an overview of the number of cars and people at the scene. This allows corroboration of witness statements and other information from the crime scene. As we track a suspect vehicle, it often passes several ground-based cameras allowing an identification of the make and model and often a license plate. These images can be useful in aiding a detective in solving a crime.

6. What privacy protections do you have in place?

The CSP has developed a strict and comprehensive privacy policy that controls and limits what our analysts can look at and the information we can provide to law enforcement. It is part of our contract with our supported cities. It lays out what we can support and what we cannot. It was developed with input from a wide range of sources including local police departments, local community groups, State and National ACLU, and many others. We have presented our program and policies at the Headquarters of the National ACLU and at some of their sponsored conferences. We have answered all of their questions and have been open about what we do and how we do it. Our privacy policy that resulted from community input and discussion is included on our website. All of our analysts are trained on the privacy policy, what it allows and what it does not allow. After being trained, each analyst signs the policy and agrees to abide by it. Our privacy policy is also placed on contract with our customers to ensure they understand it and that we adhere to it.

7. What are the boundaries of the technology?

We only follow people who are at or near a reported crime scene. Within our 32 square mile images, there are likely more than a million people. We could not possibly follow everyone nor would there be any reason to. During a typical flight, we will receive hundreds of call for service where people have reported crimes and asked for help. We prioritize these calls by their severity and first work on solving the most serious crimes. In a major crime, such as a murder or shooting, we will follow all the cars coming and going from the crime scene.We cannot determine specifically who committed the crime, who might be a witness, or who might be an accomplice. We can only determine the location of a suspect before, during, and after a crime and witness the subsequent behavior of suspects. We provide the information to detectives who use the information we provide to assist them in their investigations.

8. Is tracking of suspects and suspect vehicles automatic?

No. People at crime scenes are tracked by analysts who visually follow the suspect vehicles second by second. The CSP does not use computer automated tracking for a wide variety of reasons. The CSP uses people to review the data and to track suspect cars. We find that people are much better at tracking cars than computers. While this takes more people, it ensures accuracy. We typically follow a small number of cars per day that are directly involved in crimes within our imagery.

9. Are you flying 24/7?

We typically fly 100 to 150 hours per month over an area. We find this is easily done with a single aircraft and systems. We could fly more but it would cost more. We fly during peak periods of crime and over those areas as found by analyzing the crime statistics for a city. With the number of hours we currently fly we cannot analyze all the data and crimes we observe.

10. How is the data secured?

Our systems are highly secured through a variety of systems. First, they are maintained in a secure location. We have cameras and other security systems that ensure that only authorized people have access to the imagery. Once in the system, we record where the analysts have looked and what investigations they have worked on. All tracks are recorded on the server and are reviewable by the senior analysts to ensure that they are associated with the investigation the analyst was assigned. The backup data is also maintained on disk drives stored in secure safes.

11. How long does it take for the imagery to be processed?

The CSP imagery is captured and processed in about 5 seconds. The imagery is available in near real time to CSP Analysts at the Police Department Watch Center and the CSP analysis center. We have at times caught up to criminals as they fled a crime scene and had them pulled over in real time.