

That's No Phone. That's My Tracker

By Peter Maass and Megha Rajagopalan
New York Times, July 13, 2012

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Long Beach Police to Use 400 Cameras Citywide to Fight Crime

Tapping into hundreds of privately owned cameras, the system synchronizes law enforcement data with real-time video feeds from parks, beaches and business corridors.

By Richard Winton
Los Angeles Times, August 15, 2012

- 1 Long Beach police now have eyes everywhere.
- 2 Battling a worsening budget and seeking to make Long Beach one of the safest big cities, Police Chief Jim McDonnell is turning to more than 400 cameras citywide as a solution.
- 3 Although the city has a few dozen cameras across the community, McDonnell has set up a system to tap into hundreds of privately owned cameras that are part of the city's streetscape. The new program synchronizes law enforcement data with real-time video feeds from parks, beaches, business corridors and even some retail centers.
- 4 Dubbed Long Beach Common Operating Picture, or Long Beach COP, the "state-of-the-art program" was unveiled this week by McDonnell and Mayor Bob Foster.
- 5 "We are using every technology advantage to improve safety in this city. Long Beach officers will now know even before they arrive what potential threats they face," McDonnell said. "It will help us to respond to crimes better and prevent other crimes."
- 6 With Long Beach experiencing a 40-year low in serious crimes, McDonnell said he is looking for every advantage he can get to keep the city safe.
- 7 Said Foster: "We're putting more eyes on the street without putting more bodies out there."
- 8 The chief said it won't be a case of "big brother is watching," because a central control center will enlist the private cameras only when police know an incident is unfolding in a certain area.
- 9 "We are not running a camera-monitoring center, but it will allow us to see what happened or is occurring on a street or intersection," McDonnell said. "It is designed to make us more efficient in combating crime and to promote greater community and officer safety."
- 10 McDonnell said that when crimes occur, a quick examination of camera recordings in the moments before and after can reveal vital clues or suspects. He said London's extensive camera system helped capture terrorist bombers there.
- 11 Private security cameras are already connected to their owners electronically, and the department has been able to access such feeds when needed, he said.

- 12 The cameras are connected to a city operations center with computer terminals that can access an array of databases from the Justice Department, Department of Motor Vehicles and other agencies, allowing staff to chase down the slimmest of clues, such as a partial license plate in a bank robbery getaway, he said.
- 13 The center can also receive live feeds of pursuits from Police Department helicopters. The system will be used heavily during crisis situations and on Friday and Saturday nights when calls and incidents tend to peak, McDonnell said.
- 14 He said the center and new technologies were paid for by federal grants; he hopes one day to download images from the system to officers in their patrol cars.
- 15 The program debuts as the city and department face a budget squeeze that could slash the police agency's budget by nearly \$9 million.

