

Next Generation Identification

—released by FBI’s Criminal Justice Information Services Division

The FBI announced the award of a \$1 billion, 10-year contract to Lockheed Martin to develop what is expected to be the world’s largest crime-fighting computer database of biometric information, including fingerprints, palm prints, iris patterns, and face images.

Under its contract to build Next Generation Identification, the Bethesda contractor will expand on the FBI’s electronic database of 55 million sets of fingerprints and criminal histories used by law enforcement and other authorities. The aim is to make the query and results process quicker, more flexible, and more accurate.

Lockheed built and maintains the fingerprint database. “NGI will give us bigger, better, faster capabilities and lead us into the future,” said Thomas E. Bush III, assistant director of the FBI’s Criminal Justice Information Services Division.

The system will not expand the categories of people whose prints are collected—known criminals, known or suspected terrorists, or foreign visitors to the United States who have been convicted of a crime or an immigration violation, Bush said. But additional types of biometric data, such as iris scans and face images, will be collected from criminals and terrorists. The system also separately houses 17 million civilian fingerprints, mostly of federal employees who have undergone background checks.

To enable global sharing of data, NGI is to be built to technical standards shared by the departments of Homeland Security, Defense and State, as well as by Britain, Canada, and other countries, Bush said. The FBI also hopes to offer a service allowing employers to store employees’ prints, subject to state privacy laws, so that if employees are ever arrested, the employer would be notified.



<http://www2.citer.wvu.edu>

Beginning this year, Lockheed will conduct a series of “biometric bake-offs” to evaluate the work of biometric firms who will be competing to develop various elements of the system, and the maturity of the technologies. It will first expand the FBI’s fingerprint processing capability and add palm print processing capability, officials said. “We’re excited to move to the next generation with the FBI,” said Judy Marks, president of Lockheed Martin Transportation and Security Solutions, a business unit of Lockheed.

By adding new biometric tools and applying them together, “the system will be able to enhance its accuracy and virtually eliminate the chance of mistaken identities,” said Walter Hamilton, chairman of the International Biometric Industry Association.

Privacy advocates said that the work is proceeding before the technologies have been proven. “Congress needs to do a better job of assessing how taxpayer dollars are being spent, particularly on programs that impact the privacy rights of Americans,” said Marc Rotenberg, executive director of the Electronic Privacy Information Center.