

# Russian Tech Firm Wins U.S. Intelligence Prize Amid Hacking Fears

November 08, 2017



Tati Tata / Flickr (CC BY-NC 2.0)

A startup in Moscow has won a tech prize awarded by the U.S. intelligence community for its facial-recognition app, despite growing concerns in America about Russian cyberattacks.

Russian intelligence services are suspected of hacking the U.S. Democratic National Committee ahead of U.S. presidential elections in 2016, which saw Donald Trump elected to the White House.

Meanwhile, former employees of the Kremlin's so-called "troll factory" have this year revealed they were instructed to stoke online racial and ideological tensions in the U.S. ahead of the elections.

NTechLab [says](#) its FindFace app, which allows users to identify strangers through their smartphone, has the industry's "highest-rated accuracy." Critics say that FindFace undermines online privacy.

The mobile app is only a portion of NTechLab's facial-recognition technology. Moscow [uses](#) NTechLab's system to identify criminal suspects across a network of 160,000 surveillance cameras, using a police database of mugshots to cross-reference captured images.

**Related article:** [What Do Russian Trolls' Facebook Ads Look Like?](#)

The Russian startup was awarded \$25,000 months after an office within the U.S. intelligence community and a government technology institute [announced](#) the prize challenge to improve the recognition of faces on captured photos.

NTechLab was recognized as the best in "identification speed" and "verification accuracy," the U.S. government's tech news website Nextgov.com [reported](#) on Tuesday.

The prize was announced at a time of deep suspicions that Russian-backed hackers may have breached U.S. systems to help sway the 2016 presidential election in favor of Donald Trump.

The Nextgov.com website underscores that the cash prize doesn't indicate that the Russian firm has entered into a formal relationship with the U.S. government. It cites NTechLab CEO Mikhail Ivanov expressing hope that his firm could penetrate the U.S. market.

Around the time the prize was announced in May, a venture fund supported by billionaire Roman Abramovich [invested](#) \$1.5 million into NTechLab.

Original url:

<https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2017/11/08/russian-tech-firm-wins-us-intelligence-prize-amid-hacking-fears-a59509>