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Russia Tests Facial Recognition Cameras in Moscow Ahead of World Cup

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Sergei Vedyashkin / Moskva News Agency

Russia has reportedly launched a pilot project implementing facial recognition technology in the Moscow metro and train stations near stadiums hosting the 2018 FIFA World Cup this summer.

Around 160,000 cameras monitor Moscow as part of its "Safe City" surveillance system, including 17,000 cameras integrated into its transport system. A 2014 government decree earmarked almost $3 billion for the 2012-2019 "Safe City" program, which includes facial recognition capabilities.

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"Particular attention is paid to stations located in the immediate vicinity of the 2018 FIFA World Cup venues [...] A number of cameras, ensuring the capture of all incoming and

outgoing passengers, have been installed," the Moscow metro's press service told the Kommersant business daily on Wednesday.

The $500,000 cameras are able to identify 20 faces per second, the press service added.

The system's introduction follows the announcement that facial recognition technology had an accuracy rate of 90 percent in pilot tests at Domodedovo Airport, one of four airports serving the Russian capital.

State Duma deputy Yaroslav Nilov expressed support for the end-goal of metro surveillance cameras, but also voiced concern about mistaken identities.

"After all, there are a lot of similar-looking people, there are even presidential lookalikes," Nilov was cited as saying by Kommersant.

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