

## Cameras always on duty – Telegraph 3 July 2007

By David Millward, Transport Correspondent

Last Updated: 2:24am BST 03/07/2007

The ability to track the vehicles used in the terrorist outrages has been helped by a massive increase in the number of automatic number plate (ANPR) cameras.

At the very least the network of cameras will have made it possible to track down the movements of both the Jeep which ploughed into the Glasgow airport terminal and the car bombs left in London.

The network could have been used to plot the movements of the suspects who were arrested on the M6.

Assuming the police knew which car they were looking for, they would have been able to rely on the network of cameras on arterial roads to track its progress.

According to a former senior police officer, once the numberplate is photographed it can be compared almost instantaneously against a number of databases.

"It is possible to put a tag on the relevant databases to look out for a certain car," he said. "The matches you are talking about are very, very quick. For example a mobile ANPR vehicle parked by the side of the road can identify a car and get information to an officer 100 yards up the road in a couple of seconds."

A decision to enlarge the network was taken in 2004, with the aim of being able to track and identify every British registered car. It can handle 50 million number plate "reads" a day.

While the cameras are not on every road, they have been placed on strategic parts of the network - including at ports. They have also been placed in many petrol stations.

### □ **How it works**

1. Camera takes 10 to 15 snapshots of number plate at various distances and speeds. Camera can be fixed or mobile.
2. Number plates are coated with hundreds of tiny hemispheres that reflect light back to source. Taking advantage of this, the camera is able to block all other light, allowing it to be used in any lighting condition. Picture will be black with no detail but the number plate.
3. Using optical recognition software and the most likely possibilities from the 10 images, the number plate is converted into a readable file. File run through database of suspect vehicles. Used in conjunction with CCTV, suspect vehicles' movements can be tracked.
4. Suspect cars can be followed the length of the country using the camera network, allowing officers to plan their next move.