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Cross Match buys biometrics firm

Fingerprint leader adds German C-VIS's facial recognition technology

By L. Samuel Pfeifle, editor

PALM BEACH GARDENS, Fla.—Cross Match Technologies, a private company known as a leader in fingerprint biometrics, announced in June the acquisition of C-VIS GmbH, a company specializing in facial recognition technology located in Bochum, Germany. The deal provides Cross Match entry into the video surveillance space, along with a greater presence in Europe, building on a presence established with its 2005 acquisition of Smiths Heimann Biometrics GmbH, located in Jena, Germany. Further, Cross Match will quickly bring some of C-VIS' facial recognition products to the North American market, where C-VIS currently has no footprint.

Terms of the deal were not released, but Marcey Taylor, Cross Match senior vice president of global marketing, described C-VIS as “a small company.” However, “its richness comes in its technological expertise and the reputation [company founder Prof. Dr. Thomas] Zielke brings.”

Tom Buss, Cross Match senior vice president of product development and management, called Zielke “quite well renown in facial recognition circles around the world.” He comes to Cross Match along with C-VIS' biometric technology that allows for real-time facial image capture without having to stop or detain people whose faces you'd like to capture.



Tom Buss

“Literally, you can march 30 people through a doorway,” said Buss, “and all you'll get is 30 searchable templates of faces. So all of that processing eliminates the [unnecessary video storage]. The result is a high-speed searching method. You can just assign a camera on a lobby, with a watch list, and a guard would only be alerted if the face is on that list. It's pretty nifty technology.”

C-VIS had a “very strong past relationship with Smiths Heimann,” which was exploring the possibility of combining its fingerprint technology with C-VIS' work in facial recognition, said Buss. “That's kind of how we came to find out about C-VIS.” He said C-VIS's technology is also good for facial

acquisition, which dovetails nicely with Cross Match's forays into credentialing, such as its work with foreign ePassport programs.

“We understand that some will only want to use face,” said Buss, “so we have to support both facial and fingerprint. Now we are in a very strong position to do so.”

Cross Match recently cemented its status as a federal government supplier (it has sold a number of products to the U.S. Visit program), by releasing its L SCAN Guardian, a 10-print livescan hardware and software system that is the first to respond to the U.S. Government's Challenge to Industry, from September 2005, where the departments of Homeland Security, Justice and Defense asked manufacturers for a product that automatically captures and segments an individual's 10-fingerprint images and formats the data into FBI-compliant electronic fingerprint transaction records, all in less than 15 seconds.

The challenge gave the industry a year. Cross Match produced the Guardian in six months. “Basically their jaws kind of dropped a little bit,” said Buss. **SSN**