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Mobile fingerprint scanners latest law enforcement technology tool



Palm Beach Gardens police officer Jeffrey Main, right, demonstrates the new handheld fingerprint scanner their agency is now using with the help of David Buckley, CEO of Cross Match Technology that manufactures the device. (Carline Jean, Sun Sentinel / May 24, 2012)



By Peter Franceschina, Sun Sentinel May 26, 2012

Cross Match Technologies in Palm Beach Gardens manufacturers sophisticated biometric detection systems for the military reportedly one that was used by Navy Seals to help establish Osama bin Laden's identity after he was killed during a daring raid.

In South Florida, another piece of the company's cutting-edge technology is catching on with police and sheriff's departments - a hand-held fingerprint scanner that can reveal a suspect's true name and criminal history within a minute.

The device was first tested by the Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office a year ago, and is now in use by a number of agencies in Palm Beach and Broward counties, including **Boynton Beach** and Fort Lauderdale police. More agencies are running trials with the scanner, including **Delray Beach** and Davie police.

"It is a brilliant tool that has helped us move forward and embrace technology in police work," said Fort Lauderdale police Detective



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Travis Mandell. "When I was in the [police] academy six or seven years ago, I thought this would be a brilliant idea, and now it is in the

Britain's famed Scotland Yard, which pioneered fingerprinting as an investigative tool in the early 1900s, just deployed 350 of the cellphone-sized devices from a California manufacturer.

Cross Match's scanners are integrated with the Florida Department of Law Enforcement's criminal history database and the FBI's computerized records of wanted persons, sex offenders and terrorist suspects.

Once a fingerprint is scanned, the device sends the image through the laptop computer in a deputy's patrol car to seek matches in the databases. The device alerts if there is a hit.

Police can use the device to determine if a suspect has provided a false identity, or is wanted on a warrant. It can alert a deputy that he is dealing with a violent, career criminal - and should exercise even more caution, or call for backup.

Cross Match product manager John Bagocius said Florida is further along than most states in computerized crime-fighting and extending that technology to local law enforcement.

"The whole purpose of the tool is to identify the person," he said. "If you do get a hit, you can find out their rap sheet and find out if there are any wants and warrants. It's a great system.'

The Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office found the scanner, at a cost of about \$2,500 each, so useful the agency just ordered 174 more of them. In the last month, the scanner was used to arrest six people on felony warrants, including a sex offender, said spokeswoman Teri Barbera.

Another deputy investigating two people for stealing cars and committing burglaries in the **Boca Raton** area was presented with a Florida driver's license with a variation on the suspect's name - but the scanner revealed his identity.

Boynton Beach police are bringing five new Cross Match scanners online in early June.

"It immediately alerts the officer to the type of individual they are dealing with," said police spokeswoman Stephanie Slater. "These are going to be a tremendous resource as far as officer safety goes."

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