FROM: **NO CCTV** and **Privacy International**
(www.no-cctv.org.uk / www.privacyinternational.org)
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Attn: News Desks

-- BEGINS --

ICO PUTS PRIVATE PROFIT OVER PERSONAL PRIVACY
AS INTERNET EYES GAME LAUNCHES

The announcement that Internet Eyes is to launch on 4th October marks another dubious chapter in Britain's surveillance society with the Information Commissioner putting private profit above personal privacy.

Charles Farrier of No CCTV said:
> *"The Information Commissioner has put private profit above personal privacy in allowing a private company to launch its Stasi style citizen spy game rather than defending the rights of British citizens. This is the privatisation of the surveillance society - a private company asking private individuals to spy on each other using private cameras connected to the internet. Internet Eyes must be challenged."*

In the autumn of 2009 Internet Eyes Limited hit the headlines when they announced their desire to launch a CCTV game that they were keen to claim was not a game. A private company asking private individuals to spy on each other using private cameras connected to the internet, with a cash prize each month for the person who reports the most infringements.

No CCTV along with Privacy International complained [1] to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) as they believe that as well as being a ludicrous gimmick the game breaches the Data Protection Act. We laid out in detail the ways in which Internet Eyes breaches the Act but the ICO refused to block the launch of Internet Eyes and in fact bent over backwards to help the private company squeeze it's game into the existing legal framework.

Section 8.2 of the ICO CCTV guidelines [2] states: "[...] it would not be appropriate to disclose images of identifiable individuals to the media for entertainment purposes or place them on the internet". Despite claims of technical safeguards Internet Eyes Ltd have no way of knowing who is viewing their images and they have no way of controlling where such images are stored or distributed. For instance an internet viewer could simply use a video camera to record images from a CCTV feed and then keep those images permanently or distribute them as they see fit.

In the United States in 2008 a similar hair-brained project, called the 'Texas Virtual Border Watch Program' [3] was launched which allows anyone in the world to log on via the internet and watch a live feed of the Texas border to supposedly report suspicious activity (which in reality consists mainly of birds or deer lurking with intent).

There have been other citizen spy pilots such as the cable TV channel in East London that showed live feeds of CCTV cameras in the area. All of these seek to outsource surveillance monitoring to members of the public, making members of the public the watchers and consequently part of the surveillance state. In doing so they hope to normalise people to surveillance and aim to make people ignore the uses to which constant monitoring can be put by the state or corporations. Not to mention the appalling impact this disconnect has on society.

A BBC television programme, 'Inside Out' [4] described Internet Eyes as a "revolution" in CCTV despite the fact that it had not yet launched and that the Texas virtual border patrol that they compared it to was an enormously expensive failure ($2 million dollars spent in the first year for just 12 arrests).

Numerous studies (including those commissioned by the Home Office) have shown that CCTV does not have a significant effect on crime, so such "revolutions" are ways of ensuring that the public does not focus on the lie that they have been sold. Creating systems that encourage people to watch the world through a monitor and report those they see on the screen actually discourages them from interacting with real people and participating in the community in which they live.

Internet Eyes is still a grave concern to No CCTV and Privacy International and we call on those affected by the citizen spy game to contact us with a view to legal action.

-- ENDS --

References:

[1] The full text of the No CCTV / Privacy International complaint against Internet Eyes is available at http://www.no-cctv.org.uk/materials/docs/ICO_complaint_internet_eyes.pdf

[2] The relevant section of the ICO CCTV guidelines is at http://www.ico.gov.uk/upload/documents/cctv_code_of_practice_html/8_looking.html

[3] The Texas Virtual Border Patrol is at http://www.texasborderwatch.com

[4] More on the BBC's Inside Out programme can be found at http://www.no-cctv.org.uk/blog/bbc_runs_free_prime-time_advert_for_controversial_cctv_game.htm

NOTES TO EDITORS:

1. No CCTV is a UK group campaigning against the excessive use of surveillance cameras in the UK. Their homepage is at www.no-cctv.org.uk

2. For further information contact Charles Farrier on press@no-cctv.org.uk

3. Privacy International is the oldest surviving privacy advocacy group in the world, and was the first organisation to campaign at an international level on privacy issues. Their homepage is at www.privacyinternational.org. All media contact on this issue is to be handled by No CCTV as detailed above.