



Surveillance cameras are everywhere these days. Do they solve crime or invade your privacy? June 30, 2010

Koeppen said, "If a picture is worth a thousand words, then a video might as well be priceless. Law enforcement around the world increasingly rely on a growing network of surveillance cameras to help solve crime. But do more cameras mean more protection or a greater risk of our privacy being invaded?"

Whether in the mall, hotels, or public parks and streets, Koeppen said there's a good chance that wherever you go, a surveillance camera is close by.

Surveillance cameras have played an important role in the investigation into Stephany Flores' death. While mystery still shrouds Joran van der Sloot's involvement in the disappearance of Natalee Holloway, there appears little doubt he was the last person to see Stephany Flores alive based on the surveillance evidence collected.



A conclusion helped with the presence surveillance cameras capturing the pair in Peru that fateful night. Video shows van der Sloot and Flores entering a hotel together, but van der Sloot was the only one to ever leave. Law enforcement agencies say surveillance cameras have become a valuable crime-fighting weapon, like capturing the infamous Craigslist killer, who was identified on hotel surveillance.

And the bombings in Mumbai and London, Koeppen pointed out, suspects were brought to justice after their images were caught on tape. The Department of Homeland Security has provided \$1 billion to cities and towns to install cameras in public places.

In New York City, more than 5000 cameras are monitored by the New York Police Department - and Police Commissioner Raymond Kelly wants even more.

Kelly said, "We believe (surveillance) acts as a deterrent and if of course something happens, it provides us with a record. Or potentially provides us with information."

In January, New York police tapped into surveillance cameras after a 911 stabbing call. They were able to follow the suspect until officers could make an arrest.

Kelly explained, "It was two minutes after he left the building. That was a case of real time monitoring that paid off."

However, the rise of electronic eyes has critics. Chris Calabrese, legislative counsel for the American Civil Liberties Union, told CBS News, "These cameras are completely unregulated, there's rarely a discussion about whether it's appropriate to put a camera up, they're simply installed and we think that's slowly eroding the way people act in public." And it's not just public places where cameras are rolling. One couple was filmed by a police helicopter during a romantic moment on a private balcony. They had no idea they were being taped.

Calabrese said, "They actually watched the couple in the embrace and candidly this is what frequently happens with video footage."

Experts say there are so many surveillance cameras there are just too many to count, Koeppen said.

"You never know when somebody, somewhere will be watching," Koeppen said.

Koeppen demonstrated, showing herself on a surveillance camera in Times Square in New York City. She also demonstrated how you can watch surveillance camera feeds live from the famed Wrigley Field in Chicago via the website EarthCam.com. The website, Koeppen showed, allows anyone, anywhere to view the surveillance camera feeds live.

"The Early Show" sent a camera crew to Chicago to hear how they feel about being recorded.

"It's a little scary," one man said. "It's technology, I guess it's the way the world is now."

Another woman said she doesn't mind "because it's just another set of eyes watching my kids."

Calabrese said, "It's interesting people often want to give up their privacy rights in the abstract. If you would really like that embarrassing incident or the time when you said, 'Oh I hope nobody saw that' captured on a video camera placed on the internet and shown to millions of people, suddenly the answer changes."

Koeppen said regardless of what side of the debate you fall on, the fact remains: The cameras aren't going anywhere.

New York City Police Commissioner Kelly says, "That's the way the world is these days. I don't think there's any real turning back."

Koeppen added the broadcast that both sides of this debate point to the case of the failed Times Square car bomber. Commissioner Kelly said surveillance cameras helped track the path of the car into Times Square. The ACLU said despite the dozens of cameras surrounding the area, no clear image of the bomber was ever caught on tape.

But how do Americans feel about the cameras? Koeppen said surveys show a majority of Americans support an increased use of surveillance cameras in public places.