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## Facial Recognition App Leads to Arrest of Fugitive Drug Dealer After 13 Years on the Run

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— Categories: Crime



A man wanted for more than a decade under a European arrest warrant has finally been caught in the U.K., after being identified through a facial recognition app currently on trial with police in South Wales and Gwent.

The 38-year-old, who had been on the run since 2012 for drug offences and assaulting a police officer with a weapon in Poland, was arrested in Cardiff after the app flagged a match. He has since been remanded in custody and appeared before Westminster Magistrates' Court.

The breakthrough came through the use of the Operator Initiated Facial Recognition (OIFR) app. This tool allows officers to take a photo of a person using a police-issued mobile phone and instantly compare it to a secure image database. It has proved particularly useful in situations where individuals give false information or are unable to identify themselves.

## Real-Time Results

In South Wales, officers have already used the app 50 times, resulting in 10 arrests. Two people were issued court summonses, two were identified for non-criminal matters, and six cases were found to require no further action. Meanwhile, Gwent Police used the app six times, with three positive identifications. One of those led to the arrest of a man wanted for shoplifting, assault, and a motoring offence after he attempted to mislead officers by giving false details.

Inspector Ben Gwyer, who oversees the facial recognition programme for both police forces, explained how the tool helps officers act more decisively. “These examples have allowed officers to quickly identify individuals who have refused to give details or given false details before taking appropriate action depending on the circumstances,” he said.

He added that the app has helped identify people found in suspicious situations, as well as those who are vulnerable, unconscious, or even deceased, allowing families to be contacted swiftly.

The technology, however, is not being used without caution. South Wales Police confirmed that photos taken through the app are not stored and that officers receive clear guidance on where and when the app can be used. Special care is taken when dealing with private settings such as homes, schools, places of worship, and medical facilities, to ensure the public’s right to privacy is respected.

Gwyer stressed that the app is a support tool, not a replacement for traditional methods. “Police officers have always been able to stop people in the street who they believe are wanted or missing. This technology doesn’t replace that, it enhances our ability to confirm identities when it’s in the public interest,” he said.

The OIFR system compares a live image with a set of pre-approved reference photos and will only return a result if a strong match exists. If there is no match, no information is

returned. Independent testing by the National Physical Laboratory found that the system achieved 100 percent accuracy at its current threshold.

As questions around the future of digital policing continue, this latest arrest shows how facial recognition, when used responsibly, can be a valuable tool in keeping communities safe and ensuring wanted criminals are no longer free to walk the streets.