

Amazon Rekognition was first introduced by Amazon Web Services in 2016

The twenty-second of May in the year 2018, a letter was sent to Amazon Web Services

The American Civil Liberties Union is concerned about police using Amazon's Rekognition software

Jeff Bezos, the CEO of Amazon, received a letter from the American Civil Liberties Union complaining about Rekognition

The letter was also signed by civil rights organizations like the Electronic Frontier Foundation and the Seattle Japanese American Citizens League

The letter expressed concern over facial recognition technology being used to detect and identify Americans walking down the street

Concerned about the use of, the American Civil Liberties Union sent a letter to Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos Tuesday asking the company to place limits on how its Amazon Rekognition image-detection technology can be used by law enforcement.

Amazon Rekognition was enhanced to handle video recognition last year at AWS re:Invent 2017.

A case study was published last year describing how Rekognition is used to identify "persons of interest" in Washington County.

Amazon Rekognition is an image-recognition service

AWS released the following statement:

Amazon requires that customers comply with the law and be responsible when they use AWS services. When we find that AWS services are being abused by a customer, we suspend that customer's right to use our services. Amazon Rekognition is a technology that helps automate recognizing people, objects, and activities in video and photos based on inputs provided by the customer. For example, if the customer provided images of a chair, Rekognition could help find other chair images in a library of photos uploaded by the customer. As a technology, Amazon Rekognition has many useful applications in the real world (e.g. various agencies have used Rekognition to find abducted people, amusement parks use Rekognition to find lost children, the Royal Wedding that just occurred this past weekend used Rekognition to identify wedding attendees, etc.). And, the utility of AI services like this will only increase as more companies start using advanced technologies like Amazon Rekognition. Our quality of life would be much worse today if we outlawed new technology because some people could choose to abuse the technology. Imagine if customers couldn't buy a computer because it was possible to use that computer for illegal purposes? Like any of our AWS services, we require our customers to comply with the law and be responsible when using Amazon Rekognition.

A shoplifter was identified in Washington County by Rekognition. A photo was uploaded from the store's checkout line to a database of mugshots from people arrested in the county dating back to 2001. It helped in tracking down the suspect on Facebook after the department got four image results with greater than eighty percent similarity.

In related news, Google employees have expressed serious concerns about Google's use of machine-learning technology for military applications.

The Senior Information Systems Analyst for Washington County, Chris Adzmia, stated in the study that “Amazon Rekognition has become a powerful tool for identifying suspects for my agency”

The ACLU is worried about how easy it might be for anyone to be potentially identified as a “suspect” in this day and age.

The ACLU letter stated: “Amazon also encourages the use of Rekognition to monitor ‘people of interest,’ raising the possibility that those labeled suspicious by governments — such as undocumented immigrants or Black activists — will be targeted for Rekognition surveillance.”

Thousands of Google employees signed a petition asking Google to cancel the contract.

Several Google employees resigned in protest of the company’s Project Maven contract with the Department of Defense.