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## Smart vision paves way to better security

Firm's visual intelligence technology gears up to improve surveillance

By Elizabeth Wilmot



The men behind ArtiVision Technologies are (from left) chief technology officer, Dr Ofer Miller, chairman and co-founder Philip Soh and senior vice-president for marketing and strategy, Mr Dvir Doron. -- ST PHOTO: NG SOR LUAN

SINGAPORE may well have its very own robot - if visual intelligence tech firm

ArtiVision fulfils its lofty dream.

### SECURITY NEEDS

'In such an economic climate, I believe there will be a need to have enhanced security surveillance - purely because things may get a bit uglier as the economic situation worsens. There is always a need to feel more secure.'

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The Singapore-based company produces cutting-edge visual intelligence technology that can be integrated into camera surveillance systems.

For instance, it allows a surveillance camera to analyse video feeds in real time and identify suspicious events or recognise people of interest.

In the case of robots, the company's dream is for the technology to enable them to read surroundings and be able to react better to events.

'Our dream has always been to put our technology into robots. What the robot sees through the video camera (will lead it to) react accordingly,' said Mr Philip Soh, 41, the chairman and one of the firm's three co-founders.

'Our technology is three-dimensional, video cameras are two-dimensional. So we create the third dimension for the robot.'

Although this vision lies several years in the future, ArtiVision's technology already has a burgeoning range of useful applications currently.

Examples include intruder detection, which detects objects entering a secured area, and tracking the number of people passing through store entrances or exits.

The company's products can measure height and length of vehicles and classify them accordingly. And the firm has just launched a new facial recognition system this month, capable of detecting and identifying 'persons of interest'.

Understandably, the firm's customers tend to be involved in the security business.

'Most of our customers use our systems as a critical security platform, and are reluctant to have this published.

'We can state that we have customers from government, critical infrastructure and airports, as well as commercial clients,' said Mr Dvir Doron, 36, senior vice-president for marketing and strategy.

### New video technology

THE business, which had a turnover of \$84,004 in its third quarter ended Dec31 last year, can trace its roots back to the end of 2003.

Mr Soh was on holiday in the United States when he was introduced to Dr Ofer Miller, 39, by a mutual friend. Mr Soh was, and still is, head of business development at UOB Kay Hian.

Dr Miller - then a post-doctoral fellow at Tel Aviv University in Israel, focusing on research in video content analysis for surveillance systems - introduced Mr Soh to video content analysis technology.

'After I saw the technology, I thought that because of the Sept 11 terrorist attacks it was very relevant for security surveillance. So I said, 'Hey, let's do something.' I managed to convince him (Dr Miller) to leave academia to start this joint venture,' he said.

He also brought his ex-colleague, Mr Leong Kwek Choon, on board.

ArtiVision was incorporated in 2004 and its offices in the International Business Park opened its doors to customers. Dr Miller became the firm's chief technology officer.

Their very first product - the IVS1000 - was a video device capable of analysing four surveillance cameras for identifying suspicious events.

It was tricky getting things off the ground though.

'The early challenge was getting people to invest, to help us in our dream. The second challenge was to get engineers who wanted to work in a start-up,' Mr Soh said.

The firm eventually managed to recruit the needed engineers from the local Nanyang Technological University and National University of Singapore. And, from the three original co-founders, the business grew and now has a head count of 46.

In 2006, an office was opened in Israel predominantly for research, working alongside the existing Singapore office which is used for product development and manufacturing.

ArtiVision now sells products to about 20 countries in South-east Asia, as well as Europe, the Middle East and Africa.

### Recession hiccup

THE current economic slump has had an impact on the business and Mr Soh admits sales figures have been severely affected and some projects have had to be put on hold.

But this is a hiccup rather than a setback and the business is focused on moving forward.

By year-end, it will be hiring five or six more staff for the local office and up to five scientists for the Israel office. It also has plans to open operations in Britain and in the US.

'In such an economic climate, I believe there will be a need to have enhanced security surveillance - purely because things may get a bit uglier as the economic situation worsens. There is always a need to feel more secure,' Mr Soh said.

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