

In the fight to preserve privacy, anti-drone burqas could become the new normal



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Posted 10/16/2014 8:09 am

Updated 10/16/2014 8:36 am

You may have some unusual items in your closet in the near future. With seemingly less and less privacy, “stealth wear” may become normal. New York based professor and artist, [Adam Harvey, developed the pieces as an anti-surveillance initiative](#). The line includes anti-drone hoodies, burqas, and hijabs that shield against thermal imaging.

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It might sound provocative, but with the recent leaks by NSA whistleblower and fugitive, Edward Snowden, the fashion is timely. He revealed the NSA is able to access our phone records, emails, contacts and chats with the capability of storing it for years.

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And last month, the FBI announced the completion of its \$1 billion surveillance tool called the [Next Generation Identification System](#) or NGI. Among other things, it includes a facial recognition database expected to hold 52 million faces by the end of the year. This has left a few privacy watchdog groups, like Electronic Privacy Information Center (EPIC) concerned. The FBI says its mission is to “reduce terrorist and criminal activities.” Yet the majority of the information collected comes from American citizens who are neither criminals or suspects. Also, for the first time, non-criminal photos will be mixed with mugshots, meaning many people will be presented as suspects for crimes they never committed. And perhaps most alarming, the system is only 85 percent accurate.

This has motivated many artists to rise up and cover up.

Along with his stealth wear, Adam Harvey developed a anti-surveillance hair and make-up guide called CV Dazzle — “CV” for Computer Vision and “dazzle” for the cubist-camouflage used on World War I naval ships to keep the enemy from detecting size and location.

Since facial recognition technology uses algorithms that rely heavily on symmetry and key facial features to detect a face, Harvey studied and created asymmetrical looks that would essentially throw off detection.

While the practicality of anti-surveillance fashion is questionable, it does succeed in beginning a conversation on steps that can be taken in the future.

Credit: Kimberly Brooks, Walter Collins, Ingrid Rojas, and Carlos Poveda