

U.S. government adopts Russian "mind-reading" technology for counter-terrorism

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[In this article from Wired](#), Sharon Weinberger discusses "mind-reading" technology that the U.S. Department of Homeland Security hopes to use to identify terrorists. The DHS is interested in Semantic Stimuli Response Measurements Technology (SSRM TEK), which has been developed at the Psychotechnology Research Institute in Moscow. SSRM Tek is a software package which can, according to those who developed it, measure peoples' responses to subliminal messages presented to them in a computer game. Terrorists' responses to scrambled images (of, say Osama bin Laden or the World Trade Center) are apparently different to those of innocent people. The software, which comes with an apparatus that is mounted on the head, is being marketed as Mindreader 2.0. Earlier this year, the DHS announced that it will contract an American company called SRS Technologies to be the sole provider of Mindreader 2.0, and to conduct the first U.S government-sponsored tests of the product.

In her article, Weinberger discusses the background of the mind-reading technology, including its use by the Soviets during the invasion of Afghanistan, and other "mind-control" techniques developed by the Psychotechnology Research Institute.

Something I found particularly amusing was how the U.S. military came to discover the technology - via former science fiction writers turned Pentagon consultants Chris and Janet Morris, who attended a KGB-sponsored conference in Moscow in 1991, where the late Igor Smirnov, founder of the Psychotechnology Research Institute presented his work on mind control. (Smirnov's widow, Elena Rusalkina, now heads the institute.)

Mind-reading remains squarely within the realm of science fiction, and most probably always will. But it is not the first dubious method used by the U.S. government to gather intelligence about its enemies. During the Cold War, for example, the Pentagon employed psychics as "remote viewers" to obtain information about Soviet military targets.