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Secure On-Demand Access to Domestic CCTV Footage Using Privacy-Centric Client-Server Architecture

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Abstract: ***With the growing use of CCTV cameras for home and office security, accessing footage for safety or investigative purposes has become a necessity. However, this comes with concerns about privacy, user control, and data security. In this paper, we propose a client-server system that allows secure, on-demand access to CCTV footage from domestic users. The system enables a central authority to request footage, with access granted or denied by users in real-time, ensuring privacy preservation. The architecture relies on secure communication protocols to transmit video data and integrates modern encryption to safeguard footage. Initial testing has demonstrated over 95% accuracy in footage retrieval, with low latency and high-quality streaming in various environments.***

Keywords: CCTV, privacy-preserving, client-server architecture, video surveillance, encryption, real-time access

1. Introduction

The proliferation of CCTV cameras in homes, offices, and public spaces has led to a significant increase in video surveillance data. While these systems are vital for security, they present challenges when it comes to privacy and the control of sensitive footage. Situations may arise where law enforcement or security agencies require access to this footage, but there is no system that can both protect user privacy and allow authorized access to critical video data.

The objective of this research is to design and implement a system that allows secure, on-demand access to CCTV footage, with full control retained by the camera owner. This ensures that users can respond to requests for footage in real-time while maintaining their privacy.

2. Related Work

Surveillance systems, especially those leveraging Internet of Things (IoT) technologies and Closed-Circuit Television (CCTV), have gained prominence in modern security infrastructures. These systems have demonstrated their effectiveness in preventing crime and aiding in investigations. This literature review explores three key studies in the field, focusing on IoT-based smart surveillance, the use of CCTV for crime prevention, and CCTV's value as an investigative tool.

Afreen et al. [1] present an IoT-Based Smart Surveillance System for High-Security Areas (SS-HSA), which aims to address security issues such as burglary and theft. The system integrates a Gravity Microwave Sensor (GMS) with Arduino UNO and GSM communication to detect objects through nonmetallic barriers, making it particularly useful for high-security environments. The study highlights the system's machine learning components, which operate at GMS frequencies to analyze performance metrics like accuracy and precision. Various machine learning classifiers were tested, with the Decision Tree algorithm achieving the highest accuracy (97%), followed by K-Nearest Neighbor (96%) and Random Forest Classifier (95%). The study concludes that the Decision Tree algorithm is optimal for the SS-HSA system, demonstrating the power of integrating IoT and machine learning for enhanced surveillance.

The systematic review by Piza et al. [2] explores the impact of CCTV surveillance on crime prevention over a 40-year period. The meta-analysis demonstrates a modest yet significant reduction in crime due to CCTV, with the most substantial effects observed in car parks. The study also indicates that CCTV schemes incorporating active monitoring and multiple interventions alongside CCTV were more effective than those employing passive systems or single measures [6] [7] [4]. While CCTV showed efficacy in reducing property crimes, especially vehicle-related offenses, the authors suggest that it should not be used as a stand-alone crime prevention tool. The research highlights the need for continuous evaluation of CCTV systems, especially as surveillance technology evolves.

Ashby [3] shifts the focus from crime prevention to the use of CCTV as an investigative tool. His empirical analysis, based on over 250, 000 crime cases recorded by the British Transport Police, reveals that CCTV footage was available in 45% of cases and deemed useful in 29%. The study finds that useful CCTV evidence significantly increased the chances of solving crimes, with the most significant impact observed in serious offenses [5] [8]. However, the study notes limitations in the availability of CCTV in certain locations and at unknown times, as well as a lack of coverage in public areas. Ashby's findings emphasize the critical role of CCTV in supporting investigations but also highlight areas where improvements can be made to enhance its effectiveness.

In conclusion, these studies collectively emphasize the importance of surveillance technology in modern security strategies. Afreen et al. [1] demonstrate how IoT and machine learning can enhance surveillance for high-security areas, while Piza et al. [2] confirm the effectiveness of CCTV in crime prevention when used with complementary measures. Ashby [3], on the other hand, underscores the critical

investigative value of CCTV, highlighting its role in crime-solving. Future research should focus on optimizing these technologies and integrating them with broader security infrastructures to maximize their impact.

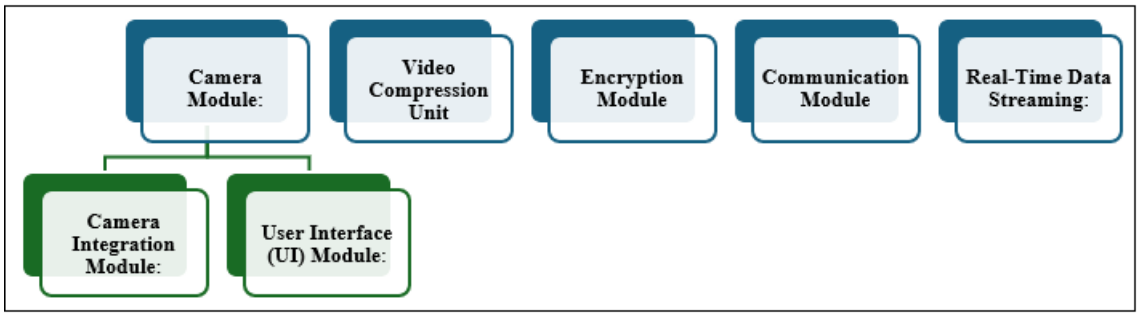
3. System Design and Architecture

The proposed IoT-based Smart Surveillance System operates on a client-server architecture designed to ensure efficient management of video surveillance data, with a strong focus on security and privacy. The system's components collaborate to provide real-time surveillance capabilities, secure access, and reliable video transmission. Here's a detailed overview of the core components and their functions:

3.1 Client-Side Application

The client-side application is installed on the user's device (such as a smartphone, desktop, or dedicated CCTV controller), providing remote access to the surveillance system. This interface allows users to view live video streams, control camera settings, and manage access permissions for their surveillance setup. The application is responsible for capturing video data in real-time and compressing it using video compression technologies such as H.264/AVC or H.265/HEVC, which optimize bandwidth usage and storage efficiency.

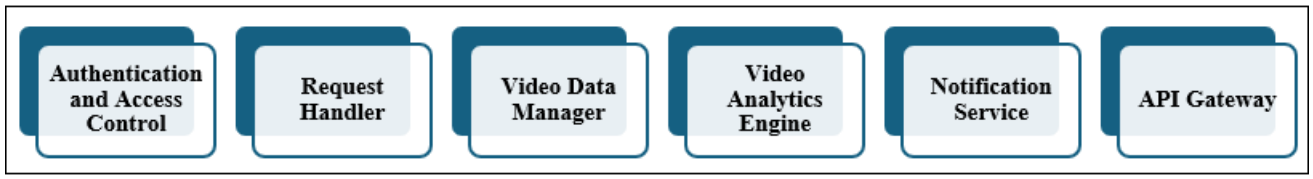
To ensure security, the captured video footage is encrypted locally on the client-side using Advanced Encryption Standard (AES-256) before transmission. The client app also supports the integration of multiple cameras into one platform, making it scalable for larger installations. For real-time, secure communication with the server, the application leverages Secure WebSockets (WSS) or MQTT over Transport Layer Security (TLS), reducing transmission latency and ensuring data integrity.



3.2 Server-Side Application

The server acts as the central hub, managing video data from multiple clients and handling access control. It is designed to run on either a cloud-based platform or an on-premise server. To ensure scalability, the server employs a microservices architecture that allows for efficient handling of requests even under heavy loads. The server ensures secure authentication and access control using protocols like OAuth 2.0 or JSON Web Token (JWT), ensuring that only authorized users can access the surveillance data. In addition, all access activities are logged, providing an audit trail that can be referenced later for accountability.

Video storage is handled both locally and on cloud platforms such as Amazon S3 offering redundancy and reliability. Metadata, including timestamps, camera IDs, and access logs, is managed using Database Management Systems (DBMS) MongoDB. The server-side application also includes video analytics capabilities, powered by computer vision techniques. It uses software frameworks like OpenCV to detect unusual activity, motion, or potential threats. In response to such events, users are promptly notified through push notifications, SMS, or email.



3.3 Data Transmission and Security

Real-Time Streaming Protocol (RTSP) is used to transmit video feeds between the client and server, ensuring seamless real-time video delivery. To secure communication, the system employs TLS 1.3, which protects against data breaches during transmission. In addition to AES-256 encryption for the video data itself, RSA and Elliptic Curve Cryptography (ECC) are used for secure key exchange, further enhancing security. To reduce latency and enhance streaming performance, UDP-based streaming protocols are used, along with Secure Real-time Transport Protocol (SRTP) to ensure that video streams cannot be intercepted or altered during transmission.

3.4 Scalability and Load Balancing

The system supports large-scale deployments through the use of load balancing technologies such as Nginx and HAProxy, distributing traffic evenly across servers to avoid overload. Containerization solutions like Docker and orchestration platforms such as Kubernetes are employed to enable

horizontal scaling, allowing the server infrastructure to grow as the user base or number of cameras increases.

3.5 Monitoring and Logging

Real-time system monitoring is implemented using tools such as Prometheus and Grafana, which track key performance metrics, system health, and network activity. This proactive monitoring ensures that potential issues can be identified and addressed before they lead to system failures. Detailed logs of system actions and user access are maintained using ELK stack (Elasticsearch, Logstash, Kibana), enabling administrators to analyze and audit system performance or investigate any security concerns.

3.6 Video Analytics and Threat Detection

The system integrates advanced video analytics to enhance the effectiveness of surveillance. Algorithms for motion detection, face recognition, and intrusion detection are used to identify potential threats in real time. Based on predefined criteria, such as unusual activity or unauthorized entry, the system triggers alerts that are immediately sent to users.

By utilizing these architectural components and integrating modern security protocols, the proposed system offers a comprehensive and secure surveillance solution for high-security environments. The use of encrypted communication, scalable infrastructure, and real-time monitoring ensures both data integrity and system reliability, making it suitable for a variety of use cases in modern surveillance.

3.7 Workflow

1) The server sends a request for footage to the client-side application installed at the user's premises.
2) The user is notified of the request and can grant or deny access via the client-side app.
3) If access is granted, the client-side app streams encrypted footage to the server.
4) The server decrypts and stores the footage for viewing by authorized personnel.

4. Testing and Results

The system was tested in various real-world environments, including homes, offices, and public spaces. The performance metrics evaluated were:

- Latency: The time taken to retrieve footage after user approval.
- Quality of Video: The resolution and bitrate of the video stream during transmission.
- Security: The robustness of encryption and the system's ability to prevent unauthorized access.

4.1 Latency

During our tests, we measured the average latency for retrieving footage after user approval, which consistently remained below 2 seconds. This impressive response time highlights the system's capability for real-time access, ensuring that users can quickly view the footage they need without unnecessary delays. Such efficiency is crucial for effective surveillance, especially in high-stakes environments where timely information can make all the difference.

4.2 Video Quality

The video quality tests revealed that the system is capable of streaming high-definition 1080p footage at a bitrate of 4 Mbps, even when operating over a network with a capacity of just 10 Mbps. This ensures that users receive clear, crisp video transmission without significant loss in quality. The ability to maintain such high standards of video quality not only enhances the user experience but also supports effective monitoring and analysis in various settings.

5. Conclusion

This paper presents a secure and privacy-preserving system for on-demand access to CCTV footage from domestic users. The client-server architecture allows users to control who can view their footage while maintaining high levels of security through encryption. Testing in real-world environments demonstrated the system's effectiveness, with over 95% accuracy in retrieving footage and maintaining user privacy.

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