



Thermal imaging sees right through fog, smoke, shadows and any number of typical concealers normally problematic for standard cameras (CCTV) and the human eye.



FLIR H-Series

WHO NEEDS AIR SUPPORT?

Anyone involved in military or law enforcement is almost certain to have benefited from FLIR Systems' technology. An acronym for "Forward-Looking Infra-Red", FLIR is used on a daily basis by hundreds of agencies throughout the United States. Until recently, most FLIR devices were mounted on a helicopter. While this aerial platform makes for safe and efficient searches (whether for armed and dangerous suspects or for lost innocent persons such as hikers or Alzheimer's patients), the vast majority of law enforcement agencies do not maintain an air support unit. Additionally, not

all uses of FLIR are in open areas — many searches conducted are of the interior of structures.

Recognizing the benefits of a portable, handheld version of their officer safety-enhancing technology, FLIR Systems created the

"H-Series." They use the same thermal imaging magic they developed over 30 years ago and mini-sized it to fit in the palm of your hand. The H-Series is offered in two variants, the standard Patrol Model or the enhanced Command Model. The primary difference between the two is the Command version allows you to take still photos or video and transmit the images via wireless RF to a nearby receiving unit such as a Command Post. Photos and video can also be saved to a 1 GB SD card; photos are saved in JPEG format and video in MPEG-4. They're date and time stamped too for evidentiary purposes.



Night Vision can be limiting, especially if there's a lot of ambient light present. Light has no effect on a FLIR H-Series — it spots heat signatures.

SO SIMPLE SWAT CAN USE IT

I'm no techno-geek; I'm more of a mechano-geek. If it's a firearm I can usually figure out assembly and disassembly without looking at the owner's manual. If the device in question is electronic in nature, I usually first consult the owner's manual. In this case, I looked to see how "user-friendly" the H-Series Command Model was *without* looking at the owner's manual. I was pleasantly surprised to find its operation very intuitive. The controls are ergonomically placed and tactile, which is important since this device will generally be used in low/no light conditions.

Weighing just less than 1.5 pounds,

the device is light enough to be used for prolonged periods without concern of fatigue. It's very rugged, shock-resistant and even submersible. The device comes with four rechargeable AA NiMH batteries and AC/DC power cords. A full charge is obtained in less than two hours and will give you about six hours of continuous use. What's better is it can also run on four regular alkaline or L-Ion AA batteries. Such diversity allows several power options in the event the rechargeable batteries (which have a six day standby mode) run out. The lengthy standby time was intentionally engineered so you can turn on the unit and

leave it in standby mode throughout your normal shift. In standby mode, the device is ready for immediate use, rather than waiting for it to "power up," which is a more time-consuming process.

Peeking At Rabbits

I tested and evaluated the H-series in a variety of lighting and environmental conditions. Since the device is a thermal imager rather than an ambient light enhancer, it identifies temperature changes or heat signatures. This technology allows you to see not only in absolute darkness, but

also other non-viewable conditions such as fog, smoke or concealment like shrubs or bushes. It also means you can use it in broad daylight. Images can be seen in either white-hot or black-hot modes.

I had my kids take turns walking across the lawn and sidewalk and then showed them their heat-signature footprints and the path they'd taken. I also had them hide a variety of objects that could resemble discarded evidence throughout the yard at night. I was easily able to find these items (knife, keys, pellet gun) hidden in the bushes.

During a coastal nighttime fog, I observed neighborhood activity using the H-Series. I watched rabbits 150' away forage on a neighbor's lawn. From approximately 200 yards away

“ My use of the FLIR H-Series demonstrated its ability to enhance surveillance missions as well as aid officer safety in searching for hidden suspects whether in an open area or inside a structure. ”

I saw people get out of a parked car and walk to their front door. My use of the FLIR H-Series demonstrated its ability to enhance surveillance missions as well as aid officer safety in searching for hidden suspects whether in an open area or inside a structure. Based upon its effectiveness, size, cost (about \$5,000 for the Patrol and \$6,000 for the Command) and potential to save lives by enhancing officer safety, this device should be considered a “must have” for all agencies, regardless of size or geographic location.



For more info: www.flir.com

About the author:
Chris Boyd is a 21-year veteran officer in California. He's worked patrol, K-9, vice/narcotics and motors, and is currently a patrol sergeant and SWAT entry-team leader. Boyd is a certified TASER, less-lethal, NFDD and firearms instructor.

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