

Video Enabled Mobile Phones Used for News Gathering

Oulu, Finland – 15th December 2003 - Over recent years the technology enhancements in mobile handsets has enabled a number of applications that were previously only seen in science fiction movies. Video is arguably the most prominent of these.

Over half a billion camera enabled handsets are forecasted to be sold by 2007, a large percentage of these are sure to have video capture capability in one form or another. It therefore comes as no surprise that global news organisations like the BBC are investigating ways to utilise this technology to deliver an unprecedented level of coverage from the street.

Working with Hantro, a Finnish company that is focused on developing video technology for mobile devices, Justen Dyche of the BBC's News Technology group has recently launched a pilot project using Nokia's 3650 handset.

“With Hantro's software installed on the 3650 we are able to capture extended length clips of video with audio which are more than adequate for news bytes. The quality is similar to that of the first satellite phones and by using the GPRS network, which provides good coverage and reasonable data speeds, footage can be sent directly into Television Centre where it can be played straight into the news galleries” say Dyche. “When you consider that there are some stories which couldn't currently be covered in any other way, for example: a commuting congestion story from the middle of a crowded subway carriage - the immediate advantages are obvious”

“The low cost of implementation and compact size of the handsets makes it feasible for every journalist to be issued with one to use when other video pathways are unavailable” Dyche continues, “it won't be long before your mobile phone will be able to record video at a quality close to that of a domestic video camera and stream live footage to our TV channels - breaking news in a fraction of the time at a fraction of the cost.”

Earlier this year, Hantro announced the release of a high resolution video codec (encoder / decoder) specifically designed for mobile handsets. Capable of capturing and encoding video at 30 frames per second in resolutions up to VGA (640 x 480), which is close to that used for DVD video.

“I have no doubt that with our VGA codec integrated the mobile phone will provide a serious challenge to low end conventional video cameras” says Tomas Myntti of Hantro. “The quality of camera sensors used is continuously being improved and, with our codec integrated on chip there is plenty of processing resource remaining for additional functionality.”

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ABOUT HANTRO

Established in 1992, from the outset Hantro has played a significant role in the research and development of handheld devices. With complete focus on wireless video solutions since 1998, the company has combined extensive mobile industry know-how with the possibilities that video has to offer. Developing both hardware and software video codecs Hantro provides the best value and performance proposition for video enabling mobile devices. In addition, the modular structure of engine/client design allows for a future upgrade path without significant redevelopment costs.

Hantro is headquartered in Oulu, Finland with offices in Espoo Finland, Saratoga USA and Tokyo Japan.