Google’s Street View Falls Short on Privacy Rights

Bradley S. Klapper, AP Writer

BERN, Switzerland (AP) -- A Swiss government official is demanding that Google Inc. immediately take off the Internet any image of Switzerland in its "Street View Maps," and the company said Monday it would discuss the matter with the privacy rights regulator.

Hanspeter Thuer, federal data protection commissioner, said Google's pictures were violating Switzerland's strict privacy laws by failing to obscure people's identities.

"Numerous faces and license numbers weren't blurred or were done so inadequately," said Thuer's statement, adding that he "demands that Google Inc. immediately take its Google Street View online service off the Internet" until it can ensure that public images respect Swiss law.

Google's Street View mapping service offers detailed street-level images. Since launching in 2007, it has expanded to more than 100 cities worldwide but has faced privacy complaints from many individuals and institutions that have been photographed.

Greece's Data Protection Authority rejected Google's bid earlier this year to roam Greek streets with cameras mounted on vehicles, while the Pentagon barred Google from photographing U.S. military bases for the service.

Residents of a small English village formed a human chain in April to stop one of Google's camera vans, while in Japan some complained that the service provided a view over the fences around their homes, prompting Google to agree to re-shoot all photos in the country.

Thuer said he would meet with Google early this week, and the company responded by saying it was looking forward to sharing views.

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