

Body check

➤ PROGRAMME DIRECTOR **JULIE GILLIS**, OF THE UK BORDER AGENCY, TELLS *FUTURE AIRPORT* ABOUT THE DELIVERY OF THE FIRST E-BORDERS PROGRAMME.

KEY FACTS

- e-Borders is a programme run by the UK Home Office to tighten security at national borders, at an expected total cost of £1.2 billion.
- The e-Borders Programme now covers 180 routes.

In recent years a number of countries have initiated biometric schemes aimed at protecting their borders. Although they are typically launched amid claims that they will accelerate the immigration process, this isn't always their central purpose, and frequently the new systems culminate in long queues.

Back in 2002 Australia unveiled its plans for SmartGate, a system that uses biometric facial recognition technology linked to the passenger's e-passport. Recent travellers to the US may have been taken by surprise by the new biometric security system in place at ten key airports there, which requires ten fingerprints for identification.

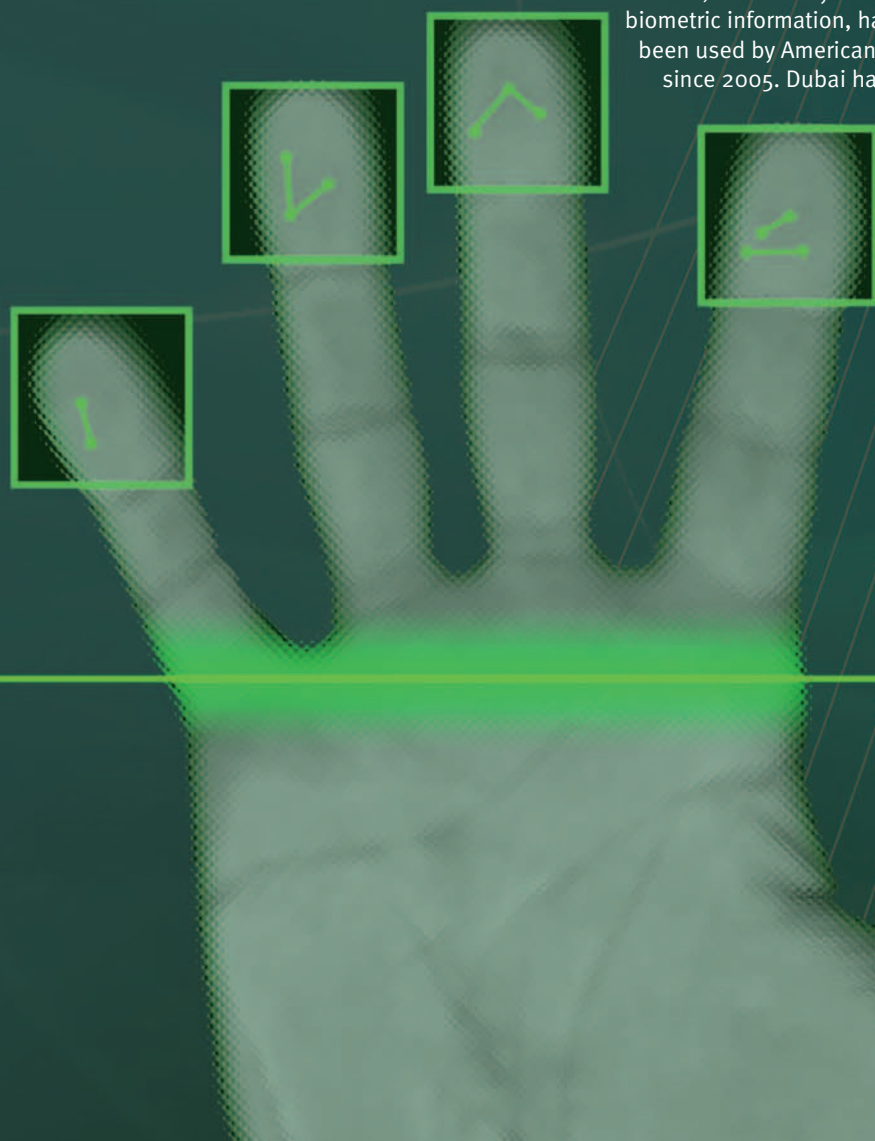
Clear Cards, which carry biometric information, have been used by Americans since 2005. Dubai has

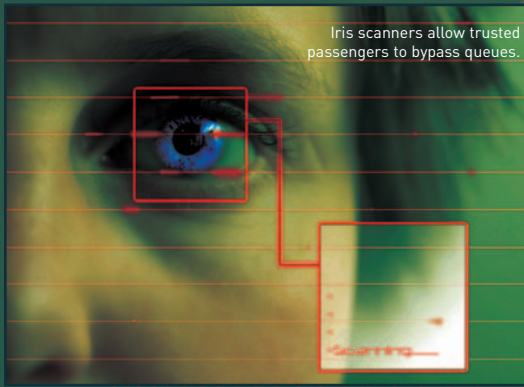
established e-gates where registered passengers swipe an ID card and pass through a fingerprint scan, and the Netherlands has introduced Privium, a paid-for iris scanning service that offers a range of benefits, including lounge access and fast-track.

Now e-Borders (electronic borders), a programme run by the UK Home Office's UK Border Agency at a likely total cost of £1.2 billion, aims to tighten security at the country's borders. e-Borders is a joint programme run in partnership with the police and intelligence agencies. It requires commercial carriers and owners, or operators, of all vessels to submit detailed passenger, service and crew data in advance of their departure to and from the UK. Julie Gillis, Programme Director for e-Borders, explains: 'Border control is undergoing the biggest shake up in border security for over 40 years. This includes fingerprinting people before they arrive; a strong new force at the border; counting people in and out of the country, and ID cards for foreign nationals.

'Part of this shake up is the introduction of the e-Borders system. e-Borders itself is about the collection of data on travellers, allowing us to check that the right people are coming into the UK, as well as looking at the people going out. We are committed to collecting 100 million passenger movements by April 2009.'

Project Semaphore, which was the operational prototype for e-Borders, ran from January 2005 to April 2008 and captured a total of 50 million passenger movements. Its function, according to Gillis, 'was to de-risk the main programme. The prototype was a real success from a de-risking perspective because we learned many lessons on how to work effectively with suppliers and service providers, for example IBM.' 102 carriers are already signed up and more than 180 routes covered. More





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than 1,800 arrests have been made at airports as a result of information gleaned from Semaphore.

Other UKBA initiatives include the use of biometrics to tighten security at the UK border and expedite the journey of legitimate travellers. For example, fingerprints are now being taken from every visa applicant, enabling the UK authorities to check against watchlists to ascertain if the applicant is a failed asylum seeker or has previously been removed from the country. There was an initial downturn in demand at an individual post level when fingerprinting was introduced but there has since been a recovery to previous levels of demand.

The Agency also embarked on a trial of biometric gates known as MiSense, a 16-week experiment at Heathrow in which about 3,000 travellers helped it to undertake the most comprehensive test of biometrically enabled access carried out in the UK to date. 'The pilot enabled us to demonstrate how self-service kiosks might accommodate biometric technology, and how best to capture passenger details and register them, giving access to controlled areas,' explains Gillis.

'We set ourselves high standards but it allowed us to link a single travel experience from check-in, entry to the security area, boarding the aircraft and automated border clearance.' However, Gillis describes MiSense as 'a contained trial' and a decision has since been made to take it no further. Gillis adds that the agency has a number of other automated services in place or under investigation.

Iris Recognition Immigration System (IRIS) is perhaps the best known constituent of the eBorders Programme. Instead of queuing at

immigration, a passenger who has registered can simply pass through the IRIS machine. At present there is one IRIS system at each of Heathrow's Terminals 1, 2 and 4, two at Terminal 3, and two further installations planned for Terminal 5. Gatwick North and South, Birmingham Terminal 1, and Manchester 1 and 2 have also been fitted out with IRIS points of entry. In addition to offering a clear security benefit – the database is cross-referenced against information stored by other agencies across the country – Gillis claims it is also a way of cutting queues and speeding up passenger flow for what she calls trusted travellers. Since the launch of the voluntary IRIS programme in 2006, 217,000 people have enrolled.

IRIS has experienced setbacks, however. It is necessary to register at the relevant office and, despite each participating airport stating specific times, enrolment offices are not always open. Another problem is that the IRIS machines haven't always worked in the past. Although these technical issues appear to have been resolved, Gillis admits that IRIS may in future be replaced with an updated system. 'We've been looking at Trusted Traveller schemes, similar to IRIS, but we're looking for those to be privately funded rather than funded by the UK government,' she says. 'It's a similar system. You enroll, provide details in advance, ensure you fit the criteria and then use the automated system to enter the UK.'

The Department for Transport estimates that if travel continues in line with current trends, 400-600 million passengers a year will pass through UK airports by 2030 (compared with 200 million in 2003). Against this background, and with IRIS becoming more popular, there is also a question of how effectively the system will cope under the increasing burden.

Gillis says the agency is looking at several options including facial recognition and fingerprinting. 'The e-passport scheme we're looking at will use biometric information contained in the chip of all the UK passports in circulation issued after 2006,' she says. 'Passengers simply insert the document into a reader at the gate, which will make some checks, and a matched passenger is then allowed in. A similar system is in place in Portugal. We're looking into whether it would be appropriate for the UK environment.' ○

UK BORDER AGENCY

The UK Border Agency is a subgroup of the Home Office. It was launched in April 2008 with the objective of improving the UK's security through stronger border protection, while welcoming legitimate travellers and trade.

The agency brings together the work previously undertaken by the Border and Immigration Agency, customs detection work at the border from Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC), and UK visa services from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO).

The agency employs 25,000 staff, including more than 9,000 warranted officers, operating both locally at UK borders and across 135 countries worldwide.



JULIE GILLIS

➔ Julie Gillis has more than 20 years' experience of working in the Immigration Service and is the director of the UK Border Agency's e-Borders Programme. Her previous role was as deputy director, border control, leading on identity management.