BORDER SECURITY
REPORT

COVER STORY
COVID-19 SECURE BORDERS
USING TECHNOLOGY TO SAFELY REOPEN TRAVEL TO THE SEYCHELLES ISLANDS

Border Challenges in 2022

As we move towards the close of another tumultuous year, it is time to reflect on some of the events and decisions of 2021 and anticipate the impact those events and decisions will have on the border community in 2022, and beyond.

As we go into December, we are seeing the rapid spread of yet another mutation of the COVID virus called 'omicron', which the WHO have called a "variant of concern".

What is different this time is the speed at which western governments have reacted in closing their borders to the countries where the new variant has been identified.

This is, and always was, the only rapid response that governments have available to them, because a medical response will always take time. Even then it only serves to slow the spread of the virus, not stop it.

As any doctor will tell you, if you have an 'infectious patient' you isolate them immediately. Then you treat them,

which is the thing that takes the time.

So, it is good to see that the lessons of the last 21 months have finally sunk in with global politicians. But it is in the second part of that response that we are failing.

Whilst most developed nations have done a good job in rolling out vaccinations to protect their own populations, it is the 'infectious patients' i.e. those with new variants, who are always likely to be from poorer nations, where vaccination programmes are slow, health services under resourced and general poverty provides the perfect conditions for viruses to spread and mutate. So, until there is a truly global vaccination programme, we are destined to play a deadly game of whack-a-mole with COVID and all its future variants.

Another big thing that happened this year is the US pull out from Afghanistan.

Any hope that the Taliban could be encouraged to moderate its hard-line fundamentalist policies and provide stable government within its borders, has proved, as I think we all really knew, illusory.

Their economy is in meltdown and the security situation remains beyond the Taliban's control. The UN says that "conflict has forced more than half a million Afghan people from their homes so far in 2021" and that the developing humanitarian crisis could become an international refugee crisis with tens of thousands of Afghan's on the move.

Afghanistan remains the world's number one producer of opium and

given the economic situation and the fact that the Taliban (including new cabinet members) already control the trade. With no other means of income available, state sponsored drug production seems to be an inevitable outcome. Therefore, we are likely to see a significant increase in opium-based drugs finding their way onto the international market.

And then there is terrorism. The Taliban's clear inability to stamp out the terrorist groups within the country, combined with the rest of that poor benighted countries troubles, looks likely to end in civil war. And terrorists love a failed state. They provide the space in which terrorist groups can exist, train, gain experience and ultimately export their own particular brand of misery.

As we look forward to 2022, we can be sure that legacy issues from this year will continue to challenge us in the months and years ahead. What we don't know yet is what new challenges 2022 has in store for us!

Tony Kingham
Editor

Webinar of the month
WATCH NOW
Drones, Drugs and Smuggling

In this webinar with Dr Sarah Jane Fox and Shaun Ryles MBE we discuss Drones, Drugs and Smuggling

As drone interceptions along borders are now almost routine, how many go undetected? They are across the border in seconds and can penetrate well beyond normal border security measures within minutes. Using drones is low risk, it requires agency cross border co-operation to counter it effectively, and rapidly developing drone capability means, increasing

amounts of contraband can be carried ever greater distances.

But how many borders include drone detection and mitigation technology along their entirety, including coastlines?

We discuss what's being done, what can be done, and what should be done.

World Border Security Congress

17th – 19th May 2022
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Developing Border Strategies Through Co-operation and Technology

SAVE THE DATES

Portugal is the westernmost state of mainland Europe, being bordered to the west and south by the Atlantic Ocean and to the north and east by Spain. Its territory also includes the Atlantic archipelagos of the Azores and Madeira. Portugal has a rich cultural heritage which is shared across the globe as a consequence of its colonial past.

Portugal has a highly developed economy and is a much-visited tourist destination. Portugal's geographical position makes it the gateway to the Mediterranean and a stopover for many foreign airlines at several airports within the country.

Portugal is also part of the Schengen area and has been an early adopter of biometrics and eGate technology.

With their experience of being in the frontline of the smuggling of drugs and illicit goods from the Atlantic, THB and economic migration challenges from Africa, Portugal is the perfect place re-convene for the next meeting of the World Border Security Congress.

The World Border Security Congress is a high level 3 day event that will discuss and debate current and future policies, implementation issues and challenges as well as new and developing technologies that contribute towards safe and secure border and migration management.

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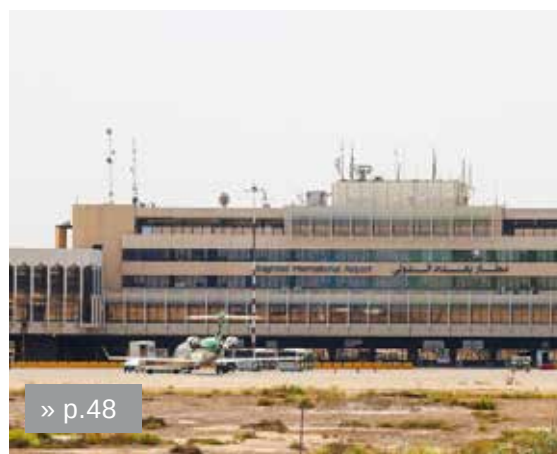ISIO - International Security Industry Organization

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Foreigners and Borders Service (SEF) abolished

The winding up of the Portuguese Foreigners and Borders Service (SEF) was approved by the Assembly of the Republic. The Government's proposal to reformulate the security forces and services that carry out internal security activities, within the framework of the reallocation of powers of the Aliens and Borders Service, was approved.

The proposal, which was agreed between the main political parties, extinguishes the SEF with the police powers transferred to the PSP, GNR and the Judiciary Police and a newly created Portuguese Agency for Migration and Asylum (APMA).

The current attributions in administrative matters of the SEF in relation to foreign citizens will be exercised by APMA and by the Institute of Registries and Notaries.

APMA will have the "mission of implementing public policies in the area of migration and asylum, namely the regularization of the entry and stay of foreign citizens in national territory, issuing opinions on applications for visas, asylum and refugee settlement, thus how to participate in the execution of the Portuguese State's international cooperation policy in the field of migration and asylum".

The draft law also establishes that until the entry into force of the diploma creating the APMA, "the rules governing the SEF's computer and communications systems are maintained in force, including those relating to the National Part of the Schengen Information System and other existing within the scope of the control of the movement of people, its management being ensured by a Security Information Technologies unit".

Within the scope of the transfer of police powers, the GNR will be responsible for "overseeing, inspecting and controlling the maritime and land borders", "acting in the context of coercive removal proceedings and the judicial expulsion of foreign citizens, in the areas of its jurisdiction" and "ensure the realization of mobile controls and joint operations with national security forces and services and Spanish counterparts".

The PSP will integrate the competences of "overseeing, inspecting and controlling airport borders and cruise terminals" and "acting within the scope of coercive removal processes and judicial expulsion of foreign citizens, in the areas of its jurisdiction".

SEF carries out operation to night entertainment establishments

The Immigration and Borders Service (SEF) carried out an inspection and investigation operation in to night entertainment establishments, in which 14 foreign nationals and nationals have been identified, two of the foreign nationals upon who measures for refusal of entry within the Schengen area were pending.

Operation "Freya", included in Europol's "Empact Action Days for Sexual Exploitation, Forced, Begging & Forced Criminality", has involved six inspector and had the purpose to fight trafficking in human beings for sexual exploitation purposes.

A Challenge Situation for Afghanistan

During the reporting period, 30,150 undocumented Afghans arrived in Afghanistan; 27,609 arrived from Iran and 2,541 from Pakistan. Overall, in 2021 1,107,766 undocumented Afghans returned, with 1,091,002 from Iran and 16,764 from Pakistan, according to the IOM Situation Report to 10th November 2021.

Driving further vulnerabilities country wide, it is estimated that 682,900 people (source: OCHA) have been internally displaced by conflict in 2021.

In 2021, IOM Afghanistan delivered needs-based assistance to over 675,017 2 (342,280 female, 332,737 male) internally displaced persons (IDPs), vulnerable undocumented returnees and host community members. IOM Afghanistan provides humanitarian assistance at border crossings, and throughout the country,

through community-based emergency shelter and non-food items (NFI) interventions, health promotion and COVID 19 prevention and protection services. IOM ensures that those most vulnerable and in need are targeted to receive assistance based on IOM's vulnerability assessments tailored to the Afghan context. IOM's ability to address the needs of vulnerable returnees through tailored assistance is due to our strong operational presence via IOM reception and

transit centres in the border provinces of Herat, Kandahar, Nangarhar and Nimroz. In addition, IOM Afghanistan focuses on addressing the drivers of migration through area-based socio-economic recovery and reintegration, as well as, community resilience, including disaster risk reduction. During the reporting period, IOM implemented activities in 27 provinces.

IOM and partners continue to provide vulnerable undocumented Afghans with immediate humanitarian post-arrival assistance at the major border crossings with Pakistan, including Torkham and Spin Boldak, and with the Islamic Republic of Iran at Islam Qala and Milak through a network of eight IOM reception and transit centres.

A total of 1,056 people (253 female, 2,803 male) received post-arrival assistance in Nimroz (706 individuals), Herat (273 individuals), Nangarhar (77 individuals) such as temporary accommodation, hot food and onward transportation.

Cash unavailability in the country has impacted operation at the borders. In particular, in Kandahar 1,983 undocumented migrants were able to collect food packages from WFP, but IOM and partners were unable to provide accommodation, hot meals or cash assistance.

IOM's Migration Health Unit continues to provide essential health services to mobile and hard-to-reach populations. IOM Mobile Health Teams (MHTs) provide essential primary health services and referrals. Rapid Response Teams (RRTs) and COVID-19 services include screening and disease surveillance, health promotion, capacity building and COVID-19 testing and laboratory services.

COVID-19 SECURE BORDERS: USING TECHNOLOGY TO SAFELY REOPEN TRAVEL TO THE SEYCHELLES ISLANDS

by Alan Renaud, Principal Secretary for Civil Aviation, Ports and Maritime, Seychelles Ministry of Transport

On March 25, 2021 the small island nation of the Seychelles made the difficult decision to fully open its borders to international visitors for the second time - vaccinated or not - and welcome tourists back to its shores. A huge risk in uncertain times, surely? Apparently not.

More than six months on and our borders are open to nearly any and everyone wishing to visit. Unlike our peers in the region, and globally, we have not come close to

deciding to shut our borders again or to increase entry restrictions. In fact, our entry requirements have steadily been whittled down, with more than 150,000 travelers processed this year alone.

Our secret? A state-of-the-art electronic Travel Authorization and Advance Passenger Information system that has helped us to pre-screen and vet passengers for health and other security risks before they step foot on our

soil. We have come a long way from July 2020, when we were manually replying to each and every application for entry via email, to using AI and machine learning to validate and verify health documents, cross-check watchlists and collect actionable data to enable real-time decision making.

Obsolete systems: adapting to a post-COVID reality

Pre-COVID, more than 460,000 people crossed our border each year. And we faced the same challenges as many other countries: a lack of information about who was coming into the country, and why; a reliance on inefficient paper forms and manual data entry; long queues at border control; and an inability to trace foreigners in-country.

But COVID-19 shook the world from top to bottom, turning everything on its head and shining a harsh light on the fragility of our inter-agency border security system. It became clear early on that the old way of doing things was not fit-for-purpose. "Border Security" was no longer the domain of law enforcement and immigration agents, but now included public health officials who required access to information, systems and processes they never had before.

This unprecedented shift put new people in the driver's seat – and I can tell you from direct experience, doctors make for wonderful intelligence analysts, perhaps because they learned long ago not to rely only on what their

patients tell them, but to filter their responses through

judgement and expertise and a keen understanding of patient motivations – but our legacy systems were unable to adapt and support this huge change. We were witnessing the transformation of a system heretofore primarily used to record who was entering our country – after all, we are a visa-free country – to being repurposed to validate travel and health documents with constantly changing entry restrictions. The two strategies – manually record people on arrival but screening them before they come – just couldn't match up without a fundamental overhaul and redesign of our border system – and in the summer of 2020, we had very little time or budget to attain it.

From Analog to Digital: forcing a paradigm shift

A national taskforce was established to support the reopening of our borders to get

our economy going again, while protecting our citizens from the health risk of COVID-19 which was raging in the world.

It has been said that necessity is the mother of invention. Never was this more true than with this global shock, which forced all our different agencies and departments to come together and work as one towards a common goal. The emergency situation provided the right framework and crucially, an appetite for a solution, across government. COVID-19 was still mutating and variants were cropping up around the world - so we had to find a flexible, agile solution that could evolve with us as we learned more about the virus. It was immediately obvious to everyone that an innovative digital solution would be needed, as any email or paper based system would be far too ungainly and difficult for travelers, and for agencies to analyse and use the data so collected.

Finding the right solution was a careful balancing act. Our Public Health Authority was extremely cautious, understandably given how little was known about COVID-19 at the time. They leaned to more stringent travel restrictions to keep the country insulated for as long as possible. On the other side, we had business owners, the tourism industry and our Ministry of Finance, pushing for the economy to reopen. Safely yes, but efficiently and quickly, as national finances were being depleted. Our Ministry was in the hot seat – our Minister was the chair of the national taskforce, and tried to build consensus and bring people together.

Pandemic proof: Implementing a Health Travel Authorization

After extensive deliberations and a weighing of proposed candidate solutions, we selected Travizory, a border security company, to digitize our existing health measures and overhaul our COVID-19 screening processes. Within 4 weeks, the Seychelles Islands Travel Authorization was up and running - providing a digital, contactless and paperless experience for travelers
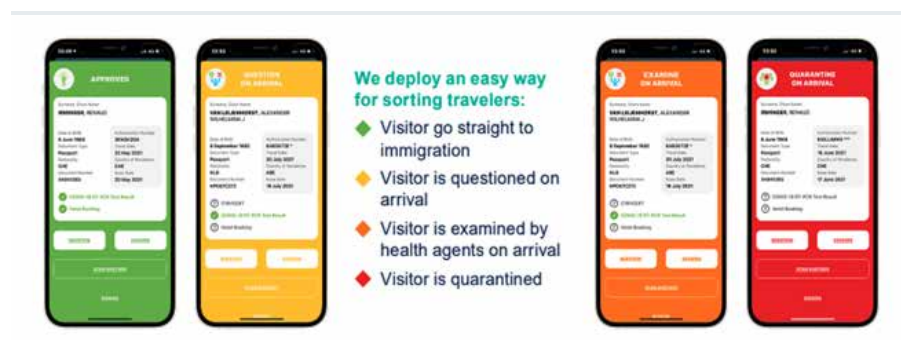
and officials.

Almost overnight, the approval process dropped from 24 hours to 3.5 hours on average. Doctors and nurses no longer had to manually reply to emails from travelers, but could instead focus on organized information about travelers, testing, and contact tracing.

In just six steps, travelers were able to apply for approval to travel to the Seychelles online and later through a bespoke app, in the language of their choice. The documents submitted through the system were examined by health and immigration officers, and individuals were authorized to travel before they departed their country of origin. Our system delivered obvious benefits to the traveler – but also to airlines and to our agencies at home.

We knew first hand that many airlines were struggling to obey each country's rules, as COVID-19 restrictions were changing almost hourly - causing chaos and confusion at check-in. With our technology, airlines no longer had to check a lengthy and ever-changing list of requirements for the Seychelles. Our authorities were responsible for approving travelers and, using the unique digital travel credentials issued by our system, airlines could easily ascertain whether a traveler was able to board the flight. Likewise, on arrival, travelers only had to show their unique QR code to officials who could sort them on whether they were approved to enter, approved subject to quarantine, or approved subject to further testing or questioning.

Our ambition was to stop travelers from boarding in the first place if they did not meet minimum national health requirements for entry (namely, a negative and freshly taken PCR test result and stay at an approved accommodation) and to do this in the most efficient way possible.

The data collected from the new

health screening also supported contact tracing efforts by health officials. If a traveler displayed symptoms during their stay, officials were able to swiftly call up information from the system to find out where the traveler had been seated on their arriving flights, who they were traveling with, and where they had been staying during their trip. This took a huge burden off of our health officials and reassured them that we could reopen and keep Seychelles a COVID-safe destination for our community and for tourists.

More than just health - addressing other national priorities

But the challenge didn't stop with COVID. The Seychelles unfortunately is known for its significant drug problem – we have one of the highest rates of heroin use per capita in the world. This scourge was threatening to ruin the future of many of our young men and women and the government had implemented a national strategy to tackle it.

Part of the strategy was to secure our borders and to stop the importation of illegal drugs. As the Principal Secretary for Civil Aviation and Chair of the National Air Transport Facilitation Committee, it had always been my intention to implement a comprehensive system that could support all our security needs and tackle every threat. I knew the same digital system we had introduced to combat the

⚠	A/L	FLT#	STATUS	ORIG	DEPARTURE	DEST	ARRIVAL	PAX	TRF	CRW	MSG	UPDATED
			- any - ⌄									
	HM	9261	arrived	IND BOM	2021-08-07 00:12	SYC SEZ	2021-08-07 04:10					n/a
	QR	0678	arrived	QAT DOH	2021-08-06 22:45	SYC SEZ	2021-08-07 04:15	213	16	11	6	2021-08-07 02:36
	SU	0244	arrived	RUS SVO	2021-08-06 21:34	SYC SEZ	2021-08-07 05:49	196			4	2021-08-06 21:18
	EK	0707	arrived	ARE DXB	2021-08-07 04:55	SYC SEZ	2021-08-07 09:35	120		13	5	2021-08-07 05:16
	SG	9909	arrived	IND MAA	2021-08-07 06:09	SYC SEZ	2021-08-07 10:28					n/a
	ET	0879	arrived	ETH ADD	2021-08-07 07:38	SYC SEZ	2021-08-07 10:57	119			2	2021-08-07 07:32
	EK	0705	arrived	ARE DXB	2021-08-07 22:10	SYC SEZ	2021-08-08 02:45	236	34	16	5	2021-08-07 22:31
	EY	0622	arrived	ARE AUH	2021-08-07 21:15	SYC SEZ	2021-08-08 05:02	139	3		5	2021-08-08 00:17
	SU	0244	arrived	RUS SVO	2021-08-07 21:42	SYC SEZ	2021-08-08 05:58	205			4	2021-08-07 21:28
	WK	0074	arrived	CHE ZRH	2021-08-07 21:49	SYC SEZ	2021-08-08 06:51	125	6		2	2021-08-07 23:59
	QR	0678	arrived	QAT DOH	2021-08-08 01:40	SYC SEZ	2021-08-08 06:55	146	2	13	6	2021-08-08 07:42
	QR	9YC	arrived	QAT DOH	2021-08-08 04:38	SYC SEZ	2021-08-08 08:52					n/a
	PJ	A6FLH	arrived	ARE DWC	2021-08-08 05:17	SYC SEZ	2021-08-08 09:29	8			1	2021-08-08 05:17
	EK	0707	arrived	ARE DXB	2021-08-08 04:55	SYC SEZ	2021-08-08 09:35	115		13	5	2021-08-08 05:06
	PJ	A7TAA	arrived	QAT DIA	2021-08-08 10:30	SYC SEZ	2021-08-08 15:02	10			1	2021-08-08 10:30
	EK	0705	arrived	ARE DXB	2021-08-08 22:10	SYC SEZ	2021-08-09 02:45	244	12	16	5	2021-08-08 22:40

health crisis had the potential to increase oversight and security of our borders - enabling collaboration, efficiency and effectiveness – and that we couldn't let the opportunity slip through our fingers.

Working with our technology partners, we ensured that one of the goals from the outset was to maximize border security, not only health security. The immediate health crisis may have been inciting event, but above all else, we could use the moment to be ahead of the curve and anticipate future and evolving threats, whether that be future pandemics, terrorism, drug trafficking, human trafficking or money laundering . Any system that we implemented had to be nimble and flexible, and be capable of adapting to the threats of the day.

Meeting international standards: implementing API/PNR

It was key for us that any platform we adopted would have to be easy to navigate for the officers using it

and that it should reflect how the officers actually work.

Taking traveler data collected via the Travel Authorization and combining it with API/PNR data from airlines, we were able to develop an unparalleled view of our travelers, combining real-time data from multiple sources to mitigate security & health risks. We created a simple icon-led view that captures COVID-19, API/PNR and watchlist data so that risky passengers were easily flagged for further examination.

Officers were also able to dig deeper into individual flights as needed, and were able to review any passenger and their status prior to departure, all the way up to the point that they embarked the flight.

The intuitive design of our system meant limited training was necessary, and very little downtime as the new system was enhanced in real-time as people were using it. The interactive interface with AI
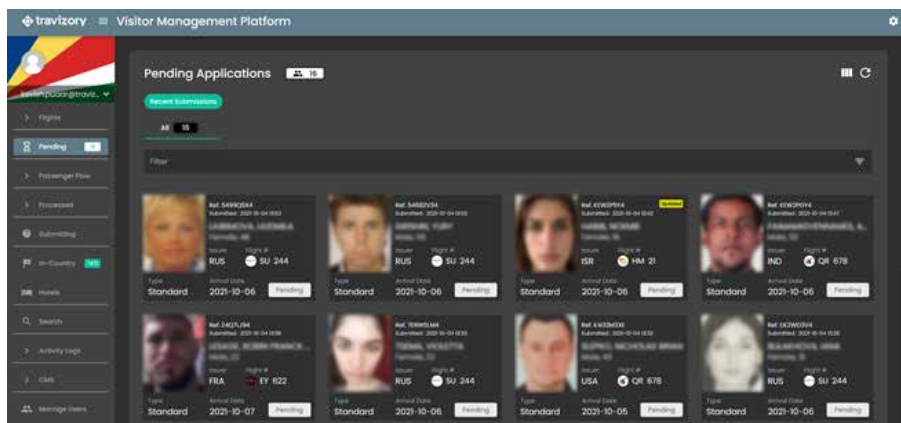
and in-built Machine Learning gave us the ability to screen passengers against international watchlists, establish relationships between groups and categorize passengers based on risk profile.

Today, I am very proud to say that we are the first country in Africa to have met the UN/ICAO mandate to implement API-PNR and that we did it in record time during a pandemic. We take our responsibility to our visitors, our citizens and the international community seriously, and do all we can to make international travel safer and more secure for all, in our small way. Fifteen international and national watchlists are integrated into the platform, and to date more than 800,000 individual passenger records have been screened. We recently integrated with the INTERPOL Stolen and Lost Travel Documents (STLD) database, guaranteeing the highest level of oversight and control of our borders.

Facing the future: Maritime security and biometric borders

Our quest for excellence is not

over and working with our partner, Travizory, we are applying the lessons we have learned in aviation to the maritime sector. With over 1.48 million square km of ocean territory, it is crucial that we know who is in our waters, why and for how long.

Digital borders aren't just about monitoring air passengers, we have to monitor all entry points to our nation and be prepared to react as needed. I had an epiphany one morning when I realised every island in our archipelago was theoretically a border point, and I wondered if we were properly screening all inbound aircraft and boats. From November 2021, we intend to introduce a maritime extension of our border management system for cruise ships, private yachts and other marine vessels. Fully integrated with the existing Seychelles Islands Travel Authorization and Advance Passenger Information systems, our newly enhanced system will vet all vessels that enter Seychelles waters, and passengers and crew will be required to pre-apply for entry into the country through a

single window on the ship side.

We are on a mission to remove all manual processing at our air and sea ports. I believe it is highly likely that in the near future, people will be able to travel using only their faces. With pre-vetting and facial recognition, the era of paper forms, physical travel documents and multiple checkpoints on arrival should become a legacy experience of the past and I would like the Seychelles to be at the lead of this. At our airport, we are installing a biometric corridor this year, to allow passengers to walk off the plane, straight through duty free and on to baggage claim with to be waved through if all the preclearance checks have been met and our officers judge nothing awry. As with any system, our human officers will still have a vital role to play in making sure no one falls through the cracks and I believe the shift we have made will give officers even greater room to profile and risk-assess more effectively.

Innovation is not a word commonly associated with government projects, and even less so for sectors like border security - but faced with the choice of watching our tourism-dependent economy collapse overnight or taking a technologically-powered leap of faith to reopen, innovation really was a no-brainer.

SEACOP contributes to seizure of 648kg of cocaine in Malaga

The SEACOP project contributed to the seizure of 648kg of cocaine through a joint operation between Spanish, Colombian and Italian authorities.

Started back in July 2021, the investigation involved various entities working in anti-drug trafficking and transnational maritime security. Notably, the operation was initiated by the Chief of the Census Room of the National Police of Colombia, who had previously received capacity building training from the SEACOP project.

The SEACOP Regional Coordinator for Latin America was heavily involved in the operation, providing direct support and advice to the different authorities. Through online technical meetings and exchange of information, he supported the creation of an operational working group encompassing representatives from the Colombian National Police, Spanish National Police, US CBP and DEA agencies in Madrid, Cartagena and Italy.

Constant collaboration allowed for the seizure, on November 11, of some 648 kilograms of cocaine inside a factory in Malaga and the arrest of the criminals.

This is yet another proof of the importance of strengthened cooperation to combat maritime illicit trade and associated criminal networks, and the need for reinforced networks between countries and regions subject to these traffics.

Seizure of 2 tons of cocaine in Dakar

The Joint Unit for the Control of Containers and Vessels (Unité Mixte de Contrôle des Conteneurs et des Navires-UMCCN) in Dakar (Senegal) intervened on 18 October to carry out a search on the yacht "La Rosa" in the port of Dakar.

The UMCCN trained in ship searches by the SEACOP project found a hideout behind the passenger cabins in which around 100 coated canvas bags loaded with cocaine were founded. In total, 2026 kg of cocaine were seized. The crew, consisting of five people of different West African nationalities (two Guineans, two Senegalese and one Sierra Leonean), was also arrested and brought to justice.

The SEACOP project, which is part of the European Union's Global Illicit Flows Programme (GIFP), is being implemented in six African countries and a large number of Caribbean and South American countries and aims to strengthen the fight against major illegal trafficking across the Atlantic Ocean, particularly cocaine trafficking. The projet seeks to encourage the creation of maritime control units and maritime intelligence units.

This seizure demonstrates the relevance of the initiative taken by the European Union, which will be continued over the next two years through a phase 5 of the SEACOP project.

ADDRESSING THE HUMANITARIAN SIDE OF IRREGULAR MIGRATION

(The following article is about cultural heritage of Afghanistan. Human lives are far more important than cultural heritage and the main priority of national and international organizations should be focused to save lives
by Sotiriou Konstantinos-Orfeas

As irregular migration continues to be a significant challenge for border management agencies, the ever-present potential consequence of illegally crossing a border is that migrants die on the journey or go missing without a trace.

The terrain along the US-Mexico border is extreme, the summer heat is severe, and the miles of desert migrants must hike after

crossing the border in many areas are unforgiving. Smuggling organizations abandon migrants in remote, treacherous areas of the desert. They force them to cross dangerous waterways when many do not know how to swim. They are also smuggled in locked, unsanitary, confined spaces. These are some of the factors that have led to a dramatic increase in the number of rescues US Customs and Border

Protection (CBP) is called upon to perform.

For years, the U.S. Border Patrol, an operational component of CBP, has sought to address the potential risks of the journey with an aim in preventing deaths, rescue migrants who go missing, assist in the identification and recovery of remains and reunify the remains with their families in their countries of origin.

In 2015, Tucson Sector Border Patrol launched the Arizona Missing Migrant Initiative (AMMI), a collaborative effort with regional foreign consulates and Arizona State officials, to streamline the search and rescue response for lost migrants, as well as the process of identifying human remains of a presumed migrant. At the time, the AMMI focused on identifying deceased persons and human remains in the custody of the local medical examiner offices (coroner official).

The initiative was prompted by a marked increase of rescue calls for distressed migrants, the year prior. Migrants crossing the border who became lost or distressed would use a cell phone to call family members, or non-government organizations, for help. In desperation, their family members and/or concerned parties, would call on various government agencies to respond. This caused duplicative efforts, confusion, and ultimately delayed the rescue operation.

The AMMI established an effective reporting process for a missing migrant, expedited search and rescue response, and facilitated the identification of human remains. The AMMI became a recognized best practice and was implemented at all sectors along the southwest border. As the AMMI expanded regionally, so did capabilities and practices.

AMMI is now officially named the Missing Migrant Program

(MMP). The U.S. Border Patrol has taken action to elevate the MMP to a national program status; standardizing best practices and ensuring the proper allocation of resources and funding to successfully support the program.

MMP remains a humanitarian program intended to serve as a focal point of information integration with State and foreign government partners. The MMP leverages technology, partnerships, and resources to save lives, and brings closure for the families of persons whose remains are identified, as well as institutionalizing such procedures by having a centralized point of contact to integrate information and reports from third parties.

"The mission of the United States Border Patrol is to secure our borders and protect the American people. However, the great risk migrants are taking in attempting to enter the country illegally, especially when trusting their lives to callous smuggling organizations, is not lost on our organization. Our agents rescue thousands of injured and severely dehydrated people every year. We value human life and we have invested extensively in programs, and through our operational efforts to mitigate the loss of migrant lives. MMP is at the forefront of these efforts," stated Manuel Padilla, Chief of Law Enforcement Operations for the US Border Patrol.

"Our agents rescue thousands of

injured and severely dehydrated people every year. We value human life, and we have much invested in programs, and through our operational efforts to mitigate the loss of migrant lives. MMP is at the forefront of these efforts," added Chief Padilla.

The MMP is part of a Congressional mandate under the Missing Persons and Unidentified Remains Act of 2019, which provides resources to various law enforcement entities and stakeholders to address the various scenarios to prevent deaths in the US-Mexico border. As part of the strategy, Border Patrol agents have placed Rescue Beacons in strategic locations throughout the border. These are equipped with lights and signage, making them visible from a distance to those that are lost and in distress. Rescue Beacons relay a distress signal to assist in rescue efforts. Deployed mobile Rescue Beacons can be relocated to adjust to changes in migration patterns. By the end of June 2021, CBP had more than 120 rescue beacons deployed.

Also, the Border Patrol has deployed thousands of 911 rescue placards which direct lost or injured migrants to call 911. The placards provide a unique location marker so Border Patrol agents can respond to their exact location. By the end of June 2021, CBP had 2,165 rescue placards in remote areas throughout the Southwest border.

By the end of June in fiscal year 2021, CBP conducted over 9,200

rescues nationwide, which is 172% higher than the number of rescues during the same time period in Fiscal Year 2020. Border Patrol agents have encountered over 1,076,000 migrants throughout the Southwest border, compared to over 260,000 found in FY2020 in the same time period, marking a 314% increase.

Despite these successful rescues, many other migrants fail to get the help they need in time. CBP has identified over 320 migrant deaths so far in Fiscal Year 2021, compared to 250 in all of Fiscal Year 2020. Around a third of these are heat-related deaths in the dangerous terrain of the desert, mountains or brush and 18 percent are water-related, often in the rivers and canals that make up our border with Mexico.

"CBP is working closely with the Mexican Government and our Central and South American counterparts to address the root causes of irregular migration and human smuggling by transnational criminal organizations," stated Debbie Seguin, Assistant

Commissioner for the Office of International Affairs. "Because of the Missing Migrant Program, we can better protect the health and safety of vulnerable migrant populations who have made the dangerous trip north to our border."

Although CBP does everything it can to locate and rescue individuals who are lost or distressed, there are thousands of square miles of mostly desert wilderness that extend immediately north of the border in their area of responsibility. Locating lost migrants in these areas is very challenging and, in many instances, unpromising. Migrants need to be made aware of the momentous risk and danger they are placing their lives in, when attempting to migrate through these remote areas. The bottom line is this: Irregular migration is extremely dangerous; for those who become lost or injured, their best chance of being rescued is to call 9-1-1 from a mobile phone, or to locate and activate one of CBP's rescue beacon in time for rescuers save their lives.

Coast Guard nabs 2 smugglers, seizes $7.5 million in cocaine following interdiction in Caribbean Sea

The Coast Guard Cutter Reef Shark transferred custody of two smugglers and offloaded approximately 250 kilograms cocaine at Coast Guard Base San Juan, following Coast Guard Cutter Kathleen Moore's interdiction of a go-fast smuggling vessel in the Caribbean Sea.

The apprehended smugglers are Dominican Republic nationals, who were charged with possession with intent to distribute cocaine aboard a vessel

subject to the jurisdiction of the United States. The cocaine seized has an estimated wholesale value of approximately $7.5 million dollars. U.S. Coast Guard Special Assistant United States Attorney Jordan H. Martin is in charge of the prosecution of this case.

The interdiction resulted from multi-agency efforts in support of U.S. Southern Command's enhanced counter-narcotics operations in the Western Hemisphere and coordination with the Caribbean Corridor Strike Force (CCSF).

During a routine patrol, a U.S. Maritime Enforcement Aircraft (MEA) detected a suspect go-fast vessel, approximately 145 nautical miles south of the Dominican Republic. Coast Guard watchstanders in Sector San Juan diverted the cutter Kathleen Moore to carry out the interdiction. With the assistance of the cutter's small boat, the crew of the Kathleen Moore interdicted the 25-foot vessel that was carrying two men and 10 bales of suspected contraband onboard, which tested positive for cocaine..

HSI, US State Department return stolen artifacts to Mali

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's (ICE) Homeland Security Investigations (HSI), in conjunction with the U.S. Department of State, repatriated a trove of stolen artifacts to the Republic of Mali. The artifacts were transferred from HSI to Ambassador Issa Konfourou, permanent representative of Mali to the United Nations.

Among the repatriated artifacts were six large funerary urns (circa 900-1700 A.D.); a comb-impressed red slip double cup vessel (circa 800-1500 A.D.); a high-necked polychrome pot (circa 1100-1400 A.D.); and 913 ground and flax stones and axe heads from the Neolithic Period.

Following the repatriation, HSI Houston Special Agent in Charge Mark Dawson discussed why it is important to return cultural antiquities to their country of origin.

"A nation's cultural property and antiquities define who

they are as a people," he explained. "No one has the right to loot or destroy that heritage and history. HSI will continue to work with our partners around the globe to aggressively target anyone who pilfers the priceless cultural treasures of a nation and work tirelessly to return them to their people for future generations to enjoy."

The artifacts first came to HSI's attention in March 2009, when U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) contacted HSI Houston to let them know that they had encountered a suspicious container at the Port of Houston. The container, which originated from Mali, claimed to be carrying replica cultural items. Upon further inspection, the items appeared to be authentic and were covered in blood and fecal matter, which sent red flags to HSI and CBP officials for possible antiquities smuggling.

Operation Mobile 4 sees 23 countries clamp down on smuggling and trafficking

EUROPOL　　　EMPACT
Joint Action Days

Joint Action Day Results:

- 518 stolen vehicles
- 400 stolen car parts
- 140 fraudulent documents
- 4 stolen boats
- 10 000 database checks
- 1 000 irregular migrants
- 31 people smugglers

Operation Mobile 4, a two-week operation targeting multiple forms of organised property crime and fraud, has successfully concluded its November

action days after thousands of border and roadside checks across Europe. Taking place in 16 European countries and further 6 Balkan states, operatives successfully intercepted hundreds of stolen vehicles and vehicle parts, as well as 1,000 irregular migrants and 31 people smugglers.

Operation Mobile 4 is a wide-ranging international operation co-led by Greece, Germany, Poland, Frontex, and Europol. Police Officers and Border Guards from 23 European and West Balkan states were involved in the investigation. Europol provided remote support by crosschecking in real-time the information collected in the field against its databases.

Over 150 arrests made in 3-day operation against organised property crime

EUROPOL

The latest actions under Operation Trivium, a multi-country operation against organised property crime on Europe's road networks, has resulted in 174 arrests and the seizure of goods throughout Europe. The three-day operation saw law enforcement from 17 countries carrying out roadside checks on people and vehicles, as well as searching premises. Europol supported the operation by sharing information on the subjects, vehicles and modus operandi behind the criminal groups in real-time. Operation Trivium is organised under the umbrella of the EMPACT security initiative.

Criminal group behind €45 million money laundering scheme dismantled in Spain

5 suspects were arrested in the Spanish province of Valencia for allegedly belonging to a criminal organisation that had laundered more than €45 million in Spain. This operation was carried out by the Spanish National Police (Policía Nacional), together with the Spanish Tax Agency (Agencia Tributaria) and Europol.

The investigation began in 2017 and focused on an organised crime group which controlled companies based in Spain and in tax havens which appeared to be the recipients of large international transactions.

 Investigators detected that a Spanish company, led by a family-run criminal organisation, had introduced over €45 million into the Spanish financial sector, funds with possible illicit origins related to corruption. Investigators examined the commercial operations of this company, mainly operating in the interior design and building decoration business, and discovered their prices to be much higher than market value given that the company was lacking in personnel and infrastructure.

EUROPOL

Cash, guns, cocaine and a suspected terrorist captured in international border operation

linking North Africa to Southern Europe has yielded 29 arrests for a variety of offences, including one on terrorism charges.

The individual concerned, arrested in Algeria, was subject to an INTERPOL Red Notice for terrorism activities. An additional 24 terrorism-related hits based on checks in INTERPOL and national law enforcement databases were identified throughout the operation.

INTERPOL deployed officers to assist local authorities in screening travellers, cross-checking their data against INTERPOL and national databases. The WCO deployed two officers in Italy and France to assist local Custom services, collected information on all Customs seizures and ensured that data were effectively shared between Customs services through its secure communication platform, CENcomm. Frontex, the European Union's Border and Coast Guard Agency, deployed officers in Italy and France to assist local authorities in profiling passengers, identifying document fraud and detecting illicit activities.

Tens of thousands of vehicles and passengers cross international borders via maritime routes every year. Traffickers and terrorists regularly take these routes, compromising regional security across Europe and Africa. Operation Neptune III produced the following results:

- Arrests: 29 individuals were arrested on charges of terrorism, drug trafficking, vehicle theft, crimes against children, sexual violence, fraud and human trafficking, among other crimes.

- Seizures: 17.5 kg of cocaine, with an estimated street value of EUR 1.2 million; More than 20,000 ecstasy pills; 189 kg of tobacco products; Five vehicles (three luxury cars and two motorcycles); One handgun and 29 hunting rifles; Over EUR 260,000 in cash.

INTERPOL-supported financial crime operation: Irish police dismantle local network operating worldwide

An INTERPOL operational team deployed to Dublin for financial crime investigations into local organized crime networks has seen national police make global connections and identify suspects worldwide.

At the request of the INTERPOL National Central Bureau in Dublin, INTERPOL's Global Financial Crime Task Force (IGFCTF) provided on-the-ground support to the Garda National Economic Crime Bureau (GNECB) as part of Operation Skein, Ireland's 18-month long nationwide investigation into an Irish based transnational criminal organization engaged in financial crime.

The INTERPOL task force enabled GNECB to share investigative intelligence with police forces in all continents using INTERPOL's secure global police communications network called I-24/7.

OSCE and UNOCT events support States in responsibly using passenger data to identify and detect terrorists and serious criminals

The OSCE Transnational Threats Department and the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT) organized a series of two events focused on supporting States in implementing passenger data programmes,

enhancing coordination between participating States, international organizations and private sector companies, and deepening regional cooperative partnerships.

The inaugural meeting of the Eastern Europe Informal Working Group (EEIWG) on Passenger Data established a new platform that aims at: facilitating discussions for sharing good practices and lessons learned and methodologies in data collection from travelers; as well as security analysis across different travel modes of travel. The meeting also laid the foundation for future events related to the working group, which will be driven by participating States in coordination support with the OSCE..

Strengthening transport security through modernization of customs and transport procedures

Best practices on modernization of customs and transport procedures as a tool to improve transport management and transport security, especially during emergency situations, were discussed at an OSCE-organized online seminar.

Best practices in the application of digital technologies and intelligent transport systems, harmonization of transport and transit procedures and ensuring sustainable and secure operation of logistic chains

during the pandemic period were presented.

"Facilitating cross-border transport is a crucial prerequisite for economic development and security. Moreover, ensuring efficient transport networks, and promoting good governance at border crossing points are vital for states to overcome issues, such as lack of access to the sea and dependence on transit services of neighboring countries," said William Leaf, Officer-in-Charge of the OSCE Centre in Ashgabat.

Roundtable discussion on Border Security and Management in the wake of the later developments in Afghanistan

The OSCE's Border Management Staff College (BMSC) held a roundtable discussion to examine the security and humanitarian situation in Afghanistan and the current and potential threats it poses to the Central Asian Region and beyond.

In his opening remarks, Valeriu Chiveri, Head of the OSCE Programme Office in Dushanbe (POiD), stressed the timeliness of the discussions on increasing border security and management in the light of developments in Afghanistan. Valeriu Chiveri also named the projects of the OSCE POiD aimed at strengthening border control, capacity-building, management, and surveillance including unified budget project "Border Security Management" and

extra-budgetary projects "Stabilization of Tajikistan's southern border region with Afghanistan", "Patrol Field Capacity Building of the Tajik Border Troops through promotion of Regional Co-operation" and "Border Management Staff College".

IOM, UNHCR Provide Emergency Aid to Asylum-Seekers and Migrants at the Belarus-Poland Borde

The IOM and the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) in Belarus were granted access to a makeshift camp on the Belarusian side of the border near the international crossing point "Bruzgi" where a group of approximately 2,000 asylum-seekers, refugees and migrants has been staying since 8 November. Among them are many children and women, including pregnant ones.

At the moment of the visit, UNHCR and IOM delivered some emergency aid, including hygienic items for children and women, as well as some food items. More assistance is on the way – such as blankets, warm clothes, gloves, hats and boots, for children – to be delivered by the organizations' partner, the Belarusian Red Cross.

This is very much emergency assistance as the main priority right now is to prevent loss of life, and advocate with the authorities to move people to safe locations, where they can be provided with adequate assistance and counseling, and where humane solutions can be found according to individuals' personal situation and needs. The makeshift camp at the border with no adequate shelter, food, water and medical care in freezing temperatures is not a safe and suitable place for people and could lead to further loss of life.

IOM Launches Institutional Strategy on Migration, Environment and Climate Change for Next Decade

The IOM has unveiled its new Institutional Strategy on Migration, Environment and Climate Change 2021-2030. The Strategy outlines how IOM will support States in their efforts to assist and protect those affected by the adverse impacts of climate change, environmental degradation, and disasters due to natural hazards, including migrants and the internally displaced.

"This strategy represents a strong long-term commitment on the part of IOM to address the climate crisis and its effects on migration. This is a priority for IOM, given the urgency of the challenges that populations around the world are facing," said António Vitorino, IOM's Director General.

In 2020 alone, over 30 million people were internally displaced by disasters, the vast majority in developing countries. Meanwhile, the World Bank has estimated that there will be more than 216 million internal climate migrants by 2050, across six regions, with almost 40 per cent within Sub-Saharan Africa.

In view of this, the Strategy sets out three objectives that will guide the Organization`s work on migration, environment, and climate change for the next decade.

New Centre to Help Stranded Migrants Opens in Bosnia and Herzegovina

A new reception centre catering to the needs of up to 1,500 stranded migrants opened in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), a key staging post for people trying to reach the European Union.

Supported by the IOM, the centre in Lipa, in north-western Una-Sana canton, replaces the former

COVID-19 emergency tent shelter there which was destroyed by fire in December 2020, when about 1,400 migrants were left without shelter and protection.

"The opening of this new Lipa centre is a critical step towards a more State-owned migration response," said Laura Lungarotti, IOM's Chief of Mission in BiH and sub-regional coordinator for the Western Balkans.

Frontex and eu-LISA sign cooperation plan

Frontex, the European Border and Coast Guard Agency, and eu-LISA, the European Union Agency for the Operational Management of Large-Scale IT Systems in the Area of Freedom, Security and Justice, concluded an agreement to strengthen their cooperation. The cooperation plan was signed by Frontex Executive Director Fabrice Leggeri and

eu-LISA Executive Director Krum Garkov during the Heads of Justice and Home Affairs Agencies annual meeting in Warsaw.

The cooperation plan, which runs from 2021 to 2023, covers ten thematic areas, including border and migration management, IT security, research and innovation as well as personal data protection.

Currently, the two agencies are working closely together to set up ETIAS – the European Travel Information and Authorisation System - which is scheduled to become operational next year and mark a major milestone in the digitalisation of European border management along with the Entry/Exit System. eu-LISA is responsible for developing these two large-scale IT systems, while Frontex hosts the ETIAS Central Unit, which will operate on 24/7 basis to support travellers and carriers.

Frontex leads international action against stolen vehicles across Europe

Combatting the trafficking of stolen vehicles, its parts, stolen boats as well preventing migrant smuggling and associated document fraud was the focus of a Frontex-led operation conducted across Europe supported by INTERPOL, Europol as well as CELBET.

The operation named Mobile 4 took place across 15

EU countries and further six countries in the Balkan region. It was an action under the umbrella of EMPACT Priority Organised Property Crime*, co-led by Greece, Germany, Poland, and Europol.

Within two weeks, officers involved in the operation performed 10 000 checks of different databases leading to the seizure of 518 stolen vehicles.

Participating countries also confiscated 400 stolen vehicle parts found in trucks and in chop shops, leading to new investigations against car crime gangs. In addition, over 140 of forged or falsified ID documents and vehicles documents were detected.

Frontex Entry Exit System Pilot Project

Frontex has just completed the Entry Exit System pilot project at land borders, which was hosted by Spain and Bulgaria. The exercise simulated the future EES environment by collecting and cross-checking the required data in full compliance with fundamental rights and personal data protection measures. During the trial, four travellers could be processed at the same time under the supervision of one border guard, proving the efficiency of the system while maintaining direct control of law enforcement officers.

As part of the trial, practical demonstrations of the

systems took place at Bulgaria's border with Turkey and Spain's border with the UK (Gibraltar) and included self-service kiosks, seamless corridors and mobile devices used for registration and verification of travellers.

The system will register travellers from non-EU countries – both short-stay visa holders and visa exempt travellers, each time they cross an EU external border.

A Challenge Situation for Afghanistan

On the African Statistics Day, the African Union Commission in collaboration with Member States, Regional Economic Communities, ILO, IOM and Statistics Sweden launched the 3rd edition of the labour migration statistics report in Africa, under the Joint Programme on Labour Migration Governance for Development and Integration in Africa (JLMP).

The key highlights of the report include bridging some of the data gaps from the previous edition by availing data from additional data sources, improved chapter on social protection, remittance, and other additional characteristics of migrant workers.

In his opening remarks, Mr. Sabelo Mbokazi, Head of Labour, Employment and Migration Division at the Department of Health, Humanitarian Affairs and Social Development, African Union Commission informed the delegates that the production of these report series has greatly improved the availability of labour migration statistics in the continent. He emphasized that with available evidence from the report, intra-regional migratory movements take prevalence in the continent as compared to outside the continent. Mr. Mbokazi further noted that with this increased migratory movements, labour migration is a priority thematic area that requires high quality, and up to date labour migration data for evidence-based policy making. He also pointed out that harmonisation of key definitions, concepts, methodologies and tools is another key priority area of concern for the Africa Union Commission.

Recognizing the importance of driving policy discourse with data and evidence-based knowledge, the Africa

Union Commission has operationalized the Pan Africa Statistics institute (STATAFRIC) in Tunis, Tunisia, the Africa Migration observatory (AMO) in Rabat, Morocco, the Africa Migration Research Centre in Bamako, Mali, and the Continental Operation Center in Khartoum, Sudan to support Member States in the production, harmonization, and research of migration statistics in different migration thematic areas including labour migration, human trafficking, regular and irregular migration among others, Mr. Mbokazi noted that "These institutions in collaboration with the JLMP look forward to putting measures in place to harmonise data in the continent and make it comparable across the board".

The representative from IOM, Mr. Jason Theede, Senior Regional Labour Mobility and Human Development Specialist, IOM Regional Office for Southern Africa said the production of the third edition of the report is a big millstone and an indication to the improvement of the labour migration data in the continent. He added that "the complexities and dynamics of labour migration have changed significantly resulting to diverse migratory movements that need to be captured accurately and reported in a timely manner so as to understand the current migratory trends. This means that each edition of the labour migration statistics report needs to capture these trends in order to reflect the current situation with more targeted policies and better decision making".

In his remarks, Mr. Alexio Musindo, Director ILO Office and Representative AU, ECA, acknowledged and appreciated the great collaborative effort between the AU, ILO, ECA and IOM in joining forces through the JLMP-Priority programme to move forward and accelerate political support for an effective labour migration governance in Africa through the improvement of labour migration data collection, analysis, and dissemination. Further, Mr. Alexio indicated that effective labour migration governance remains a key priority for the ILO in Africa because of its effects on the future of the continent. To achieve this priority, there is an urgent need for the collection, analysis and dissemination of data to contribute to effective implementation of the continental labour migration components of the 2018 UN Global Compact on Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration as well as The African Union's Revised Migration Policy Framework for Africa and Plan of Action (2018-2030).

CENTRAL ASIA, BEYOND SCRATCHING THE SURFACE

by Lina Kolesnikova, Security Expert at Experts Advisory Committee at European Forum for Urban Security (Efus)

The Central Asian region, and, especially, its borders security, recently came to the attention of a wider public due to the developments in Afghanistan. Amongst others, concerns related to regional stability, security, and potential terrorist threats, have been raised regarding this region. European authorities might have unexpectedly realised that the

EU's Central Asia strategy update, presented in 2019, remains vague as to the region's importance to the EU. That importance lends to the region's strategic location, its energy resources, and the EU's interests in regional security vis-a-vis large neighbouring players such as Russia, Iran, and China.

Regarding the latter, the EU repeatedly expressed its worries

that Beijing is slowly gaining control over strategic infrastructure that is important to the region's internal security agenda. It was also discovered that Central Asia was never part of DG NEAR (Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations) interests and, consequently, was not actively inviting to or participating in the EU projects.

Central Asia is not homogeneous

Central Asia, sometimes called informally 'The Stans' by some Westerners, consists of five countries - Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan. While diplomats and politicians like to consider the region as one area with common traits, it is not very correct. Each of these countries has its own face, history, and dynamics.

Surely, there are similarities. These countries are all ex-Soviet Union republics, granted. They have not been actively looking to break with their Soviet past, as opposed to some nationalist elites of Baltic republics, Ukraine, or Belarus. These new states used to be ruled by apparatchiks (people with a bureaucrat career in the upper ranks of the communist party), and they still have significant presence of apparatchiks and their heirs in the ruling class.

Since becoming independent states, these countries have witnessed some exodus of the non-title ethnic groups (Russians,

Ukrainians, Tatars, Germans, Polish, Greek etc), leaving the territories in significant numbers as from the 90s.

And… well, similarities seem to end here, and then the differences start.

Intra-country specifics

Central Asia is a diverse territory with many ethnic groups, languages, religions with a population of about 72 million people. Countries' economic, demographic, and military capabilities vary significantly, as well.

Two countries of the region – Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan - are very rich with natural resources and are important players as world exporters. Both countries, however, face demographic problems and depopulation.

Kazakhstan has important natural resources such as uranium,

petrol, oil, metal ores etc. It has 18 million people but, since 2014, an issue with increasing number of emigrants. In 2015, c.30.000 citizens have left the country, while by the end of 2019, that number increased by c.30% to reach a little above 45.000 people.

Turkmenistan is the most mysterious and closed country of the region, seemingly a one-man dictatorship with not much activity in the international affairs. Turkmenistan possesses the world's fourth largest reserves of natural gas and earns significantly by exporting it. The population of the country is about 6 million, the smallest amongst the Central Asian republics.

Kyrgyzstan has more than 6 million people and is rich with natural resources. However, the country cannot fully exploit them as many specialists either left the country

in the 90s or are at the age of retirement. The country also has a significant concern with the labour emigration to Russia and Kazakhstan.

Two other countries – Uzbekistan and Tajikistan – in their turn, are not very rich in natural resources. They have very positive demographic dynamics instead.

Uzbekistan is Central Asia's most populous country. Its 32.5 million people (2018 estimate) comprise nearly half the region's total population. The population of Uzbekistan is very young: 34.1% of its people are younger than 14.

The total labour migration out of Tajikistan is estimated to be in the range of 500,000 to 800,000 people, which represent about 10% of the total population of 6.9 million. Many Tajiks seasonally move to Russia.

Therefore, both countries' main export resource is their people, who work in Russia, Kazakhstan and, to

a lesser extent, in the Middle East.

Intra-region specifics

Border and other 'cross-border' disputes have become important domestic political and intra-region issues. Politicians in all countries use them for their own political benefit.

Borders

Post-Soviet independence of the Central Asian states reopened a Pandora's box of border disputes. Many of the current difficulties can be traced directly back to the Soviet legacy. The region lives in a complex stew of territorial claims and counterclaims since republics became independent states. It is a region where ethnic and political boundaries often do not match, to some extent, similar to the Middle East and Africa.

Ethnic populations who, during the 'Russian' and 'Soviet' times, had long enjoyed access to friends and families across borders have found themselves isolated within

national frontiers and have often faced difficulties in accessing 'each other'. Much of the population views these new restrictions with hostility as they see disruption in their traditional patterns of commerce and social (cross-border) interactions.

Borders, which, for all practical reasons, did not exist during the Soviet period, much more so comparing to the intra-EU borders, suddenly became international. Long-standing industrial and transportation links have been disrupted.

Customs officers and border forces are often poorly trained and frequently depend on corruption for their income. Harassment and extortion of travellers and traders has become part of the everyday reality in border regions. As cross-border travel becomes more difficult, interaction between populations that once shared many aspects of a common culture and way of life is becoming much less frequent. As new lines are drawn on the map, so new borders and new stereotypes are being created in people's minds.

Control of territory meant control of resources and improved strategic positions. Regional relations have often already been uneasy for a variety of reasons, and tensions over borders have only made these situations more daunting. The most complicated border negotiations involve the Ferghana Valley where a myriad of enclaves co-exist. Three countries which share the

valley — Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan — have raised historical claims to each other's territory and economic interests with regards to the transport routes, rivers, reservoirs, and industries.

Water and energy

Water and energy resources have become part of weaponization in the disputes.

Water has been at the heart of recurrent disputes among the four states (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan) since the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan are short on water, while Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan are short on electricity. The tension has been sharpest in the densely populated Ferghana Valley, where Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan converge. The latter two states accused their larger Uzbek neighbour of guzzling river water to irrigate vast cotton fields; Uzbekistan, for its part, bitterly fought Kyrgyz and Tajik plans to build dams upstream пеpy Syr Darya river.

Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan also argued over the hydropower projects, which Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan needed to keep the lights on. At various times, shared resources have been used by these countries as a political tool – like Uzbekistan switching off the power grids, and Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan by threatening to block the downstream water flow.

It is a positive sign that Uzbek

President Shavkat Mirziyoyev raised to back the Rogun dam and a hydroelectric project in Tajikistan. In a meeting in Astana, Mirziyoyev and his peers, Emomali Rahmon of Tajikistan and Sooronbai Jeenbekov of Kyrgyzstan, could reiterate and build upon these initial commitments. Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan might turn helping Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan in developing their hydropower capacity. To crown the effort, these four countries might reach an agreement as to the periods when the water shall be accumulated and when it should be released.

In 2018, the four states decided to coordinate efforts to improve irrigation infrastructure in border areas, where there is some risk of renewed local conflicts over water, particularly in the Ferghana Valley. Kyrgyzstan especially stands to benefit from this decision, as cross-border conflict with Uzbekistan has in the past undermined

the credibility of the central government.

Presidential leadership on this issue is vital given the top-down hierarchical nature of governance in the region. For more than two decades, the ability of locals to work together at the borders has dwindled. Technicians and engineers who worked together during the Soviet era retired. Less people have a common language – it used to be Russian but now less people master it.

With political will at the top, however, it is possible to forestall future disputes. Kyrgyz, Tajik and Uzbek water management officials in border areas should convene bilaterally and multilaterally to identify potential causes of water conflicts. Their work should be framed as technical, not political, and the presidents could publicly encourage such join effort. Where possible, officials in the

Ferghana Valley should pool resources and machinery. Irrigation infrastructure needs better repair and modernisation; but even what exists can be made more efficient with proper maintenance. Inspector groups are to be organised with a right to freely cross borders. The 'upstream' countries should plan maintenance work on reservoirs carefully and transparently, to avoid any perception of them ignoring 'downstream' needs or making an oblique political point.

President Mirziyoyev distances himself from his predecessor, Islam Karimov who, when visiting Astana in 2012, warned that water disputes could lead to a war. Mirziyoyev's trip to Dushanbe suggests he has an entirely different vision. As a downstream country, Uzbekistan can secure the release of water for irrigation by buying more electricity from Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. Doing so would also reduce Uzbekistan's reliance on thermal power plants and move it toward renewable sources as the domestic demand for electricity increases.

Inter-region specifics

Afghanistan and related matters are, by far, the single largest concern at the region's borders.

Afghanistan

The attitudes of all five states vis-a-vis the current situation in Afghanistan are rather different. Each country has its own relations with 'new' Afghanistan, from openly hostile Tajikistan and Uzbekistan to working relations in the case of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan.

Three states have a physical border with Afghanistan – Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan share a 2,387-kilometre-long border with Afghanistan.

In 2001 Uzbekistan helped the USA. Consequently, Taliban threaten it to seize Samarkand and make it a religious centre.

Uzbekistan and Tajikistan have close view, support, and partnership in dealing with Afghanistan as regional partners.

Tajik President Emomali Rahmon has refused to recognize the

Taliban-led government and condemned the militant group for alleged human rights abuses in the Panjshir Valley. Ethnic Tajiks make up more than one-quarter of Afghanistan's 38 million people, but the Taliban is predominately Pashtun, the largest ethnic group in the war-torn country.

Tajikistan is particularly tense about the resurgence of the Tajik terrorist group Jamaat Ansarullah, known in Afghanistan as the "Tajik Taliban", who were given charge of the strategically important northern border by the Taliban. Taliban has also revealed that tens of thousands of fighters have been deployed in the north-eastern province of Takhar, which borders Tajikistan.

In August, Tajikistan urged the Russia-led Collective Security Treaty Organization's member states to help strengthen security along the Tajik-Afghan border. Since then, the alliance has staged military drills in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan.

At the same time, Russia has urged Tajikistan and Taliban-ruled Afghanistan to take "mutually acceptable measures" to resolve tensions along the Tajik-Afghan border amid reports of an increased military build-up on both sides.

Distance (from the Afghan border) has its benefits, and since neither Kazakhstan nor Kyrgyzstan directly borders Afghanistan, the governments in Nur-Sultan and Bishkek could react slower and with more restrain to events, compared to Afghanistan's three immediate

neighbours.

Representatives of both the Kazakh and Kyrgyz governments have met with Taliban officials, and so far, the policies of each of those Central Asian governments seem to be engagement aimed at keeping Afghanistan at arm's length.

At the start of September, with nearly all Afghan territory in Taliban hands, Kazakh President Qasym-Zhomart Toqaev warned that Kazakhstan needed to brace for "external shocks and a worst-case scenario." "The situation in Afghanistan...presents us with the task of rebooting the military-industrial complex and military doctrine…", Toqaev said.

In Central Asia, it is the Taliban's contacts with Turkmenistan that have been most notable. Ashgabat has a deepening economic stake in Afghanistan, which it views as an important transit for electricity projects and the long-stalled TAPI gas pipeline linking Turkmenistan's gas fields to major markets in India and Pakistan.

Internal situation in Afghanistan influences security in Central Asia

Armed with sophisticated weaponry left behind by the withdrawing US troops, Taliban and the terrorist groups who might potentially find a safe harbour in Afghanistan, are expected to add to the complexities and diffusion of the regional landscape. Besides borders, issue of minorities plays a significant role as well; there are ethnic Tadjik, Turkmen and Uzbek people

historically living in Afghanistan.

The Taliban has its own history in dealing with other Islamic and terrorist organizations and movements, and that history is not one of success when it comes to fully controlling its own territory. Therefore, the question is whether the Taliban can maintain full control of the territory this time, to prevent terrorist groups such as ISIS-K (Islamic State Khorasan Province), Al-Qaeda, Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, Jamaat Ansarullah from using the territory of Afghanistan for attacking neighbouring Central Asian states.

With covid pandemic and improved terrorist attack prevention in Europe and USA, one can see the Al-Qaeda and other groups' interests settling on Asia and Africa. It could be a change of focus for Uighur, Uzbek, and other Central Asians in their ranks, to concentrate on their own countries. The IS limited capability suggest a potential paradigm shift in the drivers and

expanding geography of political violence to South and Central Asia. The shift could be boosted by the perceived defeat of the US, the second superpower to bite the dust in Afghanistan in a war against Islamic militants. The American withdrawal means the US no longer is a prime actor and a primary target in the region.

Beyond the terrorist threat, another important concern is the potential Central Asian migration pathway to the EU through Tajikistan, Uzbekistan or Kazakhstan and creation the new routes to the West. Such routes do not look feasible yet, but the risk should be considered.

The efforts coordinated by the five Central Asian countries with other regional players could create a chance to control the existing and new risks arising from inside or outside of the Central Asian region, and to largely improve regional stability and security, as well as economic development.

Migratory situation in October: Persisting pressure on Europe's Eastern Border
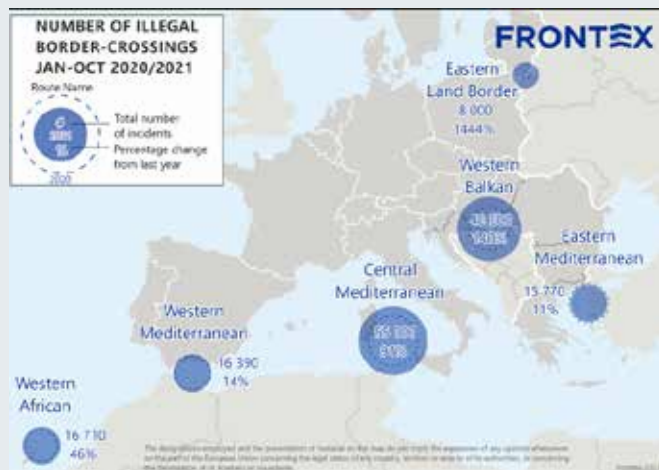
The number of illegal border crossings at EU's external borders in the first ten months of 2021 rose nearly 70% to 160 000* and 45% when compared with 2019, according to preliminary calculations.

In October, there were close to 22 800 illegal border crossings on Europe's main migratory routes, 30% more than in 2020 when pandemic-related border restrictions were in place. It is also 18% more compared with October 2019 and the pre-COVID situation.

The most significant increase was reported on the Eastern, Western Balkan and Central Mediterranean routes and in Cyprus. The number of detections dropped in the Western Mediterranean.

Eastern Borders

On the EU's Eastern frontier, the total number of detections of illegal border crossings this year amounted to close to 8 000, fifteen times more than in 2020. Main nationalities include migrants from Iraq, Afghanistan and Syria.

The EU border with Belarus remained the most affected by the migration flow in 2021. After reaching historical high of arrivals in July (climbing over 3 200), migrant arrivals on the Eastern land route decreased in the following months dropping to over 600 in October 2021.

While high level frictions between the EU and the Belarussian regime continue, the EU Member States neighbouring Belarus have all significantly

strengthened their border-control measures under exceptional states of emergency. The enhanced controls prevented large-scale flows from reaching the EU from Belarus in October.

Western Balkan route

So far this year, 48 500 illegal border crossings have been reported on the Western Balkans route. Only in October, more than 9 000 illegal crossings were detected, an increase of 140% compared with last year (3816) and an increase of 810% compared with October 2019 (1003).

That means that in October, 40% of illegal crossings into the EU occurred via the Western Balkans.

Most migrants on this route came from Syria, Afghanistan and Morocco.

Central Mediterranean route

Between January and October, European authorities reported 55 000 illegal border crossings on the Central Mediterranean route. In October alone, 6 240 illegal crossings were reported, 85% more than in the previous year under COVID-related restrictions and 186% more than in 2019.

A significant development to in October is the growing number of migrants registered in Italy arriving directly from Turkey by sea.

The main nationalities on this route included Tunisians, Bangladeshi and Egyptians. Egyptians have become the third main nationality registered in the Central Mediterranean, reported mainly from Libya.

Western Mediterranean route

In the first 10 months of this year, there were 16 390 illegal border crossings reported on the Western Mediterranean route, about 14% more than last year and 23% less as compared to 2019.

In October, 1614 illegal crossings were detected, down 42% from last year.

Algerians accounted for 63% of illegal crossings on this route, followed by Moroccans (29%).

Western African

On the Western African route, the total number of detections this year stood at 16 710, up 46% from 2020 and an increase of 1020% compared with 2019 In October, 3515 illegal crossings were detected, 34% fewer than in the same month last year.

Most migrants on this route came from Morocco and sub-Saharan Africa.

Eastern Mediterranean

Between January and October, 15 770 illegal crossings were registered on the Eastern Mediterranean route,

down 11% from 2020 and 76% from 2019. In October, 2585 illegal crossings were detected, 40% more than in the same month last year. The overall number of illegal crossings on this route remains below last year's, with the strong increase in arrivals in Cyprus partially balancing the significant decrease in arrivals in the Eastern Aegean.

Most migrants on this route came from Syria, Turkey and Congo (Kinshasa).

WTTC and ETC call on EU Member States to effectively coordinate and align responses to the evolving epidemiological situation

The World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) and the European Travel Commission (ETC), supported by a number of key travel stakeholders, have urged EU Member States to align their responses to the deteriorating COVID-19 situation and avoid imposing any limits to the freedom of movement across Europe.

The organisations say the sector cannot afford inconsistent and ever-changing national responses, and a joint EU approach is the only solution to saving the struggling Travel & Tourism sector in Europe.

The European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) is now acknowledging that EU travel restrictions have not had a significant impact on reducing virus transmission, hospitalisations, or deaths.

WTTC and ETC stress that measures aiming at restricting border crossing would not have any health benefits but could result in a huge economic impact to the region.

According to latest WTTC research, up to 900,000 jobs are at risk across the EU's Travel & Tourism sector this year if travel restrictions are reimposed this winter.

Furthermore, governments across the EU could see up to €35 billion wiped from the sector's contribution to the economy before the end of 2021 if severe travel restrictions come back into force.

WTTC and ETC say EU Member States have the power to influence and drive forward the coordinated recovery effort needed to preserve the sector and only a

coordinated approach will save the millions of livelihoods that depend on the sector.

Julia Simpson, WTTC President & CEO, said: "We urgently need to restore the confidence to travel and not create more uncertainty. It is vital we have a properly coordinated response across the EU which both businesses and travellers can understand.

"The vaccination rollout across the EU is among the best in the world with 65% of the population now fully vaccinated. We cannot afford to let all the hard-earned progress made this year to be reversed. This will have catastrophic consequences for jobs and livelihoods.

"While we fully recognise that protecting public health is paramount, we urge all EU Member states to continue using the EU's Digital COVID Certificate, which has successfully allowed fully-vaccinated people to travel safely and freely."

Luís Araújo, ETC's President, added: "As the colder months approach and some European countries face a worsening epidemiological situation, we call on the EU governments to work together to ensure the freedom of movement across Europe".

"We must avoid any further uncertainty or fragmentation. With the high vaccination rates, EU COVID Certificate and strict safety protocols in place, safe travel is absolutely possible. In the lead up to the highly anticipated holiday season, EU citizens need clear and coherent rules".

Frontex Consultative Forum publishes eighth annual report
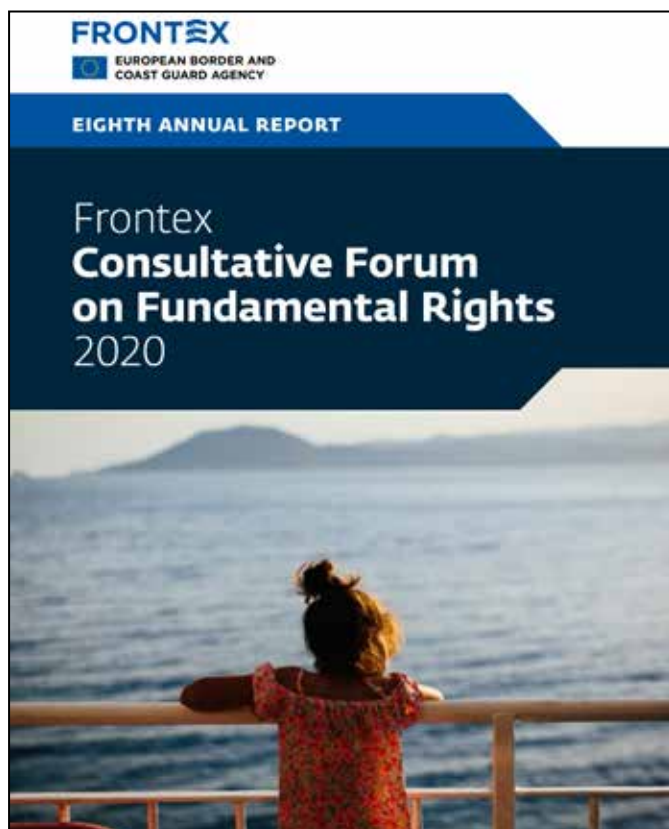
The Frontex Consultative Forum on Fundamental Rights published its eighth annual report for the year 2020. The report outlines the main observations and recommendations that the Forum raised throughout the year with Frontex, the European Border and Coast Guard Agency, and its Management Board to strengthen fundamental rights protection in Frontex activities and increase accountability and transparency.

The report outlines the state of play of internal and external fundamental rights safeguards at Frontex, including the Fundamental Rights Officer, monitors, reporting procedures and the complaints mechanism. It also provides recommendations about the need to further strengthen fundamental rights in Frontex activities, such as aerial surveillance, engagement with non-EU countries and return operations. The Forum also issued recommendations with regard to the mainstreaming of fundamental rights in the Agency's training products and tools.

The year 2020 marked an extremely challenging time

for the management of the EU's external borders and the fundamental rights of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees. The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated existing challenges at the EU external borders, but also led to new approaches and innovative solutions.

Overall, the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic had a significant effect on most aspects of migration management and asylum systems. Beginning in March 2020, States introduced a variety

of measures to curb the spread of the virus, such as lockdowns, travel bans and border closures. While there was and remains a clear public health imperative, many of these measures caused hardships to travellers and disruptions in asylum application procedures, in Dublin procedures and in return and resettlement operations worldwide.

As EASO reported, the pandemic also affected Member States' asylum and reception systems, forcing national authorities to find new ways of working. With fewer new applications and the use of new methodologies to process asylum applications, the backlog of pending cases dropped significantly.

The EU Pact on Migration and Asylum put forward a set of legislative and non-legislative instruments that aim to better regulate migration and asylum matters. It confirms Frontex's role as the operational arm of EU return policy, with a dedicated

Deputy Executive Director on Returns. The Pact also envisages strengthened Frontex operational support to Member States, including on Search and Rescue operations, but without providing any specific mandate to the Agency in this area, apart from recalling existing obligations under Regulation 2014/656 on the surveillance of sea borders. Frontex is also tasked with playing a crucial role in the upcoming strategy on the future of Schengen, especially through its annual vulnerability assessments.

In 2020, irregular arrivals to the EU reached the lowest number since 2013. According to Frontex's preliminary figures, around 124,000 irregular arrivals were detected throughout the year, a 13% decrease compared to

2019. While the Eastern Mediterranean route, with the exception of Cyprus, experienced the biggest drop in arrivals (by over three-quarters), the Central Mediterranean was the most active migratory route into Europe, with a total of 35,600 sea crossings. Border crossings also decreased in the Western Mediterranean, while the Canary Islands saw 22,600 arrivals, which amounts to eight times of the 2019 figure. Finally, arrivals through the Western Balkans increased by over three quarters, to almost 27,000. In this context, Frontex strengthened its support for the Cypriot and Spanish authorities in response to the increase in arrivals to Cyprus and the Canary Islands in the second half of the year.

New asylum applications decreased significantly. In 2020, about 458,000 applications were lodged in the EU+, around 30% less than in 2019. As the pandemic unfolded, the European Commission, UNHCR22 and EASO23 issued guidance and recommendations to safeguard asylum seekers' access to territory and file applications, as well as adequate health standards in reception and detention facilities. While acknowledging the clear imperative to take firm actions to combat the pandemic, the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT) of the Council of Europe pointed out the absolute nature of the prohibition of such treatment. In their statement, the CPT underlined that protective measures must never result in ill-treatment of persons deprived of their liberty, and issued a set of principles that should be applied Following Turkey's temporary halt of border control measures at its Western land borders in late February, Greece issued a decree suspending the right to apply for asylum for one month. UN Agencies, including UNHCR, IOM and the OHCHR Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Migrants, the Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe as well as 85 EU and international NGOs, expressed their serious concerns about this suspension, including pointing out that neither international law nor EU refugee law provides any legal basis for the suspension of asylum procedures.

In March, following a request from the Greek government, Frontex launched two Rapid Border Interventions at the Greek land and sea borders, deploying additional assets and staff in the country. The Rapid Border Interventions

were deployed despite the serious concerns expressed by the Fundamental Rights Officer that they could lead to serious violations of fundamental rights or international protection obligations. The Fundamental Rights Officer had

thus urged the Agency to "reconsider the launch and continuation of RBI Evros 2020 as per Article 46 (4) and (5) of the Regulation 2019/1896."

The COVID-19 pandemic also greatly impacted Frontex's work, especially in relation to forced return operations. According to the Agency's figures, the number of return operations dropped from March, with a slow increase as of the beginning of June. Moreover, following Turkey's suspension of readmissions from Greece, such operations were put on hold from March onwards.

As a result, the number of returnees in the first half of 2020 was 48% lower than in the same period of 2019. Since February 2020, Frontex has, however, supported voluntary returns performed by scheduled and chartered flights.

Despite the major difficulties the pandemic presented to Frontex's work over most of 2020, the Agency worked intensively to implement its new mandate under the 2019 Regulation, and in particular the recruitment and training of the first batch of the Standing Corps, who were deployed in January 2021. Progress on the implementation of the new regulation's fundamental rights provisions was very limited in 2020. Despite the establishment of a framework for the future Fundamental Rights Monitors with specific monitoring tools and a training program being developed, the recruitment process was launched only at the end of the year and not all 40 Fundamental Rights Monitors could be recruited.

The much-needed substantial reforms of the Serious Incident Reporting and individual complaints mechanisms were not initiated during the reporting period. Similarly, the supervisory mechanism for the use of force was not established before the deployment of the Standing Corps.

In December 2020, the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) issued a judgment declaring that the Hungarian legislation on asylum is in breach of EU law and fundamental rights obligations.36 This prompted the Agency to suspend, for the first time, its operations in accordance with Article 46 of Regulation 2019/1896

with the exception of its activities in the field of return. The Agency took this decision after consultation with the Fundamental Rights Officer. Prior to that consultation, the Consultative Forum, which had repeatedly expressed concerns about the fundamental rights situation in Hungary, issued a recommendation to the Fundamental Rights Officer advising the termination of Frontex operations in the country.

Violence and pushback allegations continued to be widely reported on the Western Balkan route, particularly at the Croatian border with Bosnia and Herzegovina, at the Hungarian-Serbian border and at the Greek sea and land borders with Turkey. Moreover, since October, Bellingcat, Der Spiegel, the EU Observer and other media raised a series of allegations of Frontex's involvement in or witnessing of pushbacks in the Aegean Sea. The Agency initiated an internal inquiry, which concluded that the allegations could not be substantiated. Commissioner for Home Affairs Ylva Johansson took a firm stance on the need to look into these allegations and to clarify them. She called for an extraordinary Frontex Management Board meeting, following which the Board established a Working Group to further inquire into the allegations. Ultimately the "Working Group on Fundamental Rights and Legal Operational Aspects of

Operations in the Aegean Sea" (FRALO), composed of members of the Frontex Management Board (France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Norway, Romania, Sweden, Switzerland and the European Commission) was set up, chaired by the German alternate Management Board member. FRALO's mandate was to carry out an inquiry into 14 cases reported through Frontex internal reporting mechanisms and the media. The final results of this inquiry were published in March 2021. The Consultative Forum attended one FRALO and two extraordinary Frontex Management Board meetings and published a set of fundamental rights considerations in the context of search and rescue operations and interception at sea. While these events occurred in 2021 and are outside of the period of review for this Annual Report, they are important to note as they underscore the relevance of the recommendations the Consultative Forum made to the Agency and the Management Board throughout 2020 and indeed in prior years.

The European Ombudsman opened an own-initiative inquiry to assess the effectiveness and transparency of Frontex's complaints mechanism in November.

The full report is available for download at www.frontex.europa.eu

Nigeria and Cote D'Ivoire Sign Counter Trafficking Agreement

As part of the deliberate policy of the present administration to enhance regional cooperation in the fight against human trafficking especially within the African corridors, the Federal Government of Nigeria has signed a Cooperation Agreement with the Republic of Cote d'Ivoire to prevent, suppress, and punish trafficking in persons especially trafficking in women and children, amongst other Cooperation Agreements.

This was the high point of the second session of the Ivorian-Nigerian Joint Commission of Cooperation, which held in Abidjan. This Agreement, which is expected to further deepen collaboration and mutual cooperation between the two Countries will be implemented by the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP), for and on behalf of the Government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

The objective of the Agreement is to develop a common front to prevent, and punish, trafficking in persons by sharing of intelligence and sensitization campaigns in both Countries; to protect, rehabilitate and reintegrate victims of trafficking into their original

environment and to promote friendly cooperation between both countries.

The high-level delegation of the Federal Republic of Nigeria was led by His Excellency the Vice-President, Professor Yemi Osinbajo, His Excellency Ambassador Zuberu Dada, Minister of State, for Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Mariam Katagum, Minister of State for Industry, Trade and Investment, Dr Fatima Waziri-Azi, The Director-General of NAPTIP, as well as several senior government officials and representatives from various Ministries, Departments and Agencies.

This development came on the heels of the renewed commitment and strategic focus of the Director General of NAPTIP to strengthen ties with Anti-Trafficking Agencies within the West African subregion to effectively curb human trafficking. The Director General, in an interactive session with the Ivorian counterparts, discussed current trends of trafficking, shared concerns and challenges in the fight against human trafficking, and pledged their commitments towards jointly curbing trafficking in persons.

AKRO detect drug in hidden truck compartment

The AKRO police can detect drugs in the double floor of the roof of a truck type vehicle, in the early morning hours of youth in the integrated control of Tababuela, Ibarra.

The driver of the Jarrín Ángel B.P. car was under

police control located 30 minutes north of Ibarra, in the place that was carefully inspected by the police force of the Unidad Nacional Canina supported by a drug detector. In a convenient compartment to the structure of the truck, it carries 339 rectangular shaped cruisers that have the "27A" logo, which contain a white rocky substance. The chemical treatment used as a result of cocaine with a net weight of 337,644g.

The subject was apprehended and placed under orders from the competent authority for the corresponding legal procedures. The opportune police intervention prevented that around 3´376440 doses of narcotic substance from reaching the local consumer market. In between, the vehicle and the drug were transferred to the Provincial Head Office for Anti-Narcotics..

60 kilos of cocaine hidden in truck

Personal dependent on the School 45 "Salta" spread over kilometer 1,438 of National Route No.9 controlled a truck with semi-trailer coming from the Bolivian city of Santa Cruz de la Sierra with final destination in the province of Neuquén.

When the uniforms inspected the cargo area of the wheelset, they observed at a glance three bags of green colored canvas and one arpillera type, a place which alerts the personnel of La Fuerza, as it does not coincide with the mineral "barite" that describes the document. MIC/DTA (International Cargo Manifesto

/ Customs Transit Declaration) presented by the conductor.

In view of this, with the participation of anti-narcotics canon "Tango", which reacted in an exalted way to sniffing the sounds, the employees confirmed the presence of narcotics, by which they proceeded to open the same words before their testimonies.

The gendarmes prevented 58 "ladrillos" that contained a total of 60 kilos 580 grams of cocaine.

Operation Cava Deals blow against finances from criminal organizations dedicated to smuggling

A criminal organization dedicated to the manufacture, distribution and sale of adulterated liquor, gave appearance of legality to it through the manufacture and reuse of packaging, labels, departmental revenue stamps, to be sold subsequently in premises of shopping centers in the city of Bogotá DC.

This domain extinction operation was executed through a thorough investigation derived from the dismantling of this Organization on September 24, 2019, achieving the capture of 6 people, to which through controlled purchases and raids was achieved

the seizure of 76,416 bottles of liquor, 4 cylinders of liquor, 692 tags, 2131 rings, 1 colander tank, 450 stamps, 02 handmade machines, 01 steel tank.

In the procedure, 8 properties were occupied (7 homes and a commercial premises), evaluated at 2,375 million pesos, which would have been used for the storage, distribution and illicit commercialization of adulterated liquor, without compliance with the requirements required by customs legislation.

Singapore and Malaysia police bust 2 job scam syndicates

When promised reimbursements and commissions were not paid, the victims smelt a rat and made police reports. The police said they and their Malaysian counterparts have smashed two transnational job scam syndicates which allegedly cheated more than 390 people here of $5 million.

Ten people in Malaysia and 14 in Singapore were arrested in a joint operation planned by the police in both countries.

Preliminary investigations showed that the five men and five women aged between 21 and 32 who were nabbed in Malaysia targeted Singaporeans and Malaysians, and laundered their criminal proceeds in Malaysia.

The 12 men and two women arrested in Singapore - aged between 17 and 44 - allegedly facilitated the syndicates' crimes by carrying out bank transfers or fund withdrawals, or relinquishing their bank accounts to the syndicates for monetary gains.

The Singapore police said since May they had received increased reports of scammers posting job advertisements on social media. These advertisements said the work involved helping to improve sales on online platforms by ordering goods or liking TikTok or YouTube videos.

Once these initial tasks were completed, the victims were told that their account could be upgraded to get higher commissions. They were instructed to pay for the goods by transferring funds to different bank accounts.

They were promised reimbursements of the full sum and a 5 per cent to 15 per cent commission. While the scammers kept their word at first, they later promised commissions only after a certain number of tasks had been done, and delayed payments. The victims realised they had fallen prey to a scam when they did not receive subsequent reimbursements and commissions.

Cambodia arrests six drug criminals, seizing over 200kg of illicit drug worth millions

Cambodian police have arrested six men for allegedly trafficking and possessing over 200kg of illicit drug worth millions, the National Police reported.

The suspects were caught during a raid at a house in Sre Ambel district in the coastal province of Koh Kong, which

shares border with Thailand's Trat province.

"More than 200 kg of suspected crystal meth packed in 10 boxes and a large wooden boat were seized from them during the raid," the National Police said on its website.

The Southeast Asian nation has no death sentence for drug traffickers. Under its law, anyone found guilty of trafficking more than 80 grams of illicit drugs could be imprisoned for life.

Cambodia's Anti-Drug Department has reported that during the January-September period of 2021, the authorities had detained 9,828 drug suspects in 4,461 cases across the country, confiscating some 1.05 tons of illicit drugs.

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AGENCY NEWS AND UPDATES

Guardia Civil dismantles a criminal organization dedicated to drug trafficking at European level

The Civil Guard, within the framework of the "Montiel" operation, has proceeded to arrest 15 people belonging to a criminal organization dedicated to drug trafficking nationwide. The detainees are charged with the alleged crimes against public health, belonging to a criminal organization, trafficking in human beings, document forgery, usurpation of civil status, money laundering and fraud of electricity.

In the operation, 7 records have been made, two of them in industrial buildings in the province of Albacete, another two in industrial buildings in the Valencian towns of Oliva and Corbera, another two in the Murcian towns of Torre Pacheco and Archena and one in

Seville . From the records carried out, 6,648 cannabis sativa plants, 47,139 grams of dried marijuana buds, € 8,478 in banknotes, 168,000 Hungarian forins, 1,780 remninbi (Chinese currency), 7 high-end vehicles and material necessary for operation and installation have been intervened. of indoor plantations that have been dismantled.

BOC Seizes Smuggled Onions and Garlics

The Bureau of Customs (BOC) – Port of Zamboanga, Enforcement and Security Service – Customs Police Division (ESS–CPD) Zamboanga District Office, Customs Intelligence

and Investigation Service (CIIS) Port of Zamboanga Field Station, and Subport of Zamboanga Peninsula (ZAMPEN), in coordination with Department of Agriculture – Bureau of Plant Industry (DA – BPI) Pagadian City, seized two (2) delivery trucks carrying sacks of smuggled onions and garlic, during a BOC checkpoint in Brgy. New Labangan, Labangan, Zamboanga del Sur.

According to the drivers of the two wing-van trucks, they came from Cagayan de Oro City and were tasked to deliver assorted local goods and vegetables to Pagadian and Zamboanga City markets. Upon closer inspection of its cargoes, it was found out that several small sacks of allegedly imported onions and garlic were mingled with locally manufactured goods and vegetables. The same goods were inventoried in the presence of DA-BPI representatives.

The 151 small sacks of red onions and 121 small sacks of garlic, with an estimated market value of Php190,400, were seized in violation of the Customs Modernization and Tariff Act (CMTA) and RA 10845 or the Anti-Agricultural Smuggling Act.

Border guards exposed several "paths" of Bukovyna smugglers

In Bukovyna, Ukraine, border guards twice during one day stopped attempts of smugglers who tried to illegally smuggle tobacco contraband to neighboring Romania.

In particular, the servicemen of the Chernivtsi detachment blocked the road to two groups of smugglers who were heading to the state border. To detain them, border guards organized their pursuit and fired warning shots up. The smugglers threw off their heavy backpacks with cigarettes on the move and, in order not to get caught by the border guards, ran away.

In both cases, the offenders lost 7.5 thousand packs of cigarettes. The approximate cost of the product is almost 300 thousand hryvnias.

Action Plan to Combat Fuel Smuggling entered into force in Turkey

In order to provide a more effective inspection and control mechanism in the fight against fuel smuggling and to increase efficiency and productivity in the fight process; The Action Plan for Combating Fuel Smuggling, dated 23/02/2012, whose actions were completed with the Prime Ministry Circular No. 2012/19 dated 23/08/2012, was repealed, and 2021 on the topic of

Measures to Combat Fuel Smuggling, which was prepared considering new smuggling trends and current needs. The Presidential Circular No. /22 was published in the Official Gazette dated 06/11/2021 and numbered 31651 and entered into force.

The Action Plan to Combat Fuel Smuggling, which is stated in the 12th article of the said Circular and includes the necessary combat activities before the relevant units, has been put into effect by being published on the official internet of the Ministry of Commerce.

Two persons arrested, 318 packages of presumed cocaine seized

Agents of the National Drug Control Directorate (DNCD), with the support of State intelligence agencies and under the coordination of the Public Prosecutor's Office, seized 318 packages, presumably cocaine, in an inspection operation in the municipality of Boca Chica, Santo Domingo province.

A team made up of several DNCD agents observed a red truck parked on Fausto Cruz street in the sector of Los Cedeños de la Caleta, and when they stopped, a man near the place fled.

Subsequently, the presence of a prosecutor was requested, and a search of the truck was initiated with canine units. As a result, the canines

found a secret compartment with eleven sacks containing the substance packages in the rear section.

"Preliminary reports indicate that the shipment in the truck would be delivered to the Multimodal Port of Caucedo, to then try to ship it out of the country," said the press release.

State Agencies Target Illicit Trade on Kenya-Tanzania Border

Government agencies are working to stem smuggling and the flow of contraband on the porous Kenya-Tanzania border in the Coast region.

"We need a tougher approach to trafficking and the seizure of all contraband goods at border points to send a signal that we are on high alert," said Coast Regional Commissioner John Elungata. Mr Elungata urged security officials at the Shimoni and Vanga border points to help stem the flow of illegal goods.

He also said that the trade in illicit goods and substandard counterfeit products hurts local manufacturers. The trade also robs the government of millions of shillings in tax revenue.

Kenya Revenue Authority (KRA) Southern Region Coordinator Joseph Tanui said that smugglers use boats, motorcycles and unofficial routes to bring the goods into Kenya.

Nigeria will work with France to dismantle transnational criminal networks

In a press statement, Femi Adesina,

special adviser to the president on media and publicity, said the president spoke at a working lunch with President Emmanuel Macron of France.

Buhari said international criminals are exploiting vulnerable people in both continents in the "most dehumanising ways".

The statement quoted him as saying: "On security, we commend France for its strong commitment to peace and security in the Sahel and the Lake Chad region. This has contributed significantly to the fight against terrorism and extremism in the region.

"Irregular migration and human trafficking are issues of concern to both Nigeria and France. Transnational criminal networks operating in Africa and Europe are exploiting the vulnerable in the most dehumanising ways. We are committed to working with the relevant French authorities to dismantle these networks."

Azerbaijan seizes huge heroin shipment

Azerbaijan has thwarted an attempt to smuggle over 622 kg of heroin across the country's customs border, State Customs Committee Chairman Col-Gen Safar Mehdiyev has tweeted.

"As part of measures to combat illicit drug trafficking, customs officers conducted another successful operation. Attempts to smuggle more than 622 kilograms of heroin across the country's customs border were prevented," wrote on his official Twitter page.

According to operational information, a truck, sent by an Iranian citizen, transporting raisins to Moldova through the Azerbaijani territory, was detained at the Astara customs checkpoint. Upon inspection, heroin weighing 301 kilograms 475 grams was found in one

part of the fuel tank [which was divided into two parts].

Cocaine haul 'worth €38m' found in onion rings shipmentl

A haul of cocaine worth an estimated £33 million (€38 million) was found in a

shipment of onion rings about to enter the United Kingdom.

The illicit cargo weighing 418 kilos was discovered by Border Force officers when they stopped a lorry at the UK inbound zone in Coquelles, France.

A Polish national has been charged with smuggling Class A drugs.

NDLEA intercepts 16.85kg cocaine, heroin consignments at Lagos seaport, airport

Operatives of the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency have intercepted consignments of cocaine and heroin with a combined weight of 16.85 kilograms worth over N4.9 billion in street value at the Apapa seaport and Murtala Muhammed International Airport in Lagos.

The Director, Media and Advocacy, NDLEA Headquarters, Abuja, Femi Babafemi disclosed in a statement.

He said four persons are currently being investigated for the 13.65kg cocaine seized onboard a ship, MV Karteria that

came into the Apapa port from Santos, Brazil on Sunday, November 7, 2021, barely three weeks after 32.9kg of cocaine was intercepted at the port on another vessel, MV Chayanee Naree, also from Santos, Brazil. .

More than 4 tons of cocaine worth around $362M seized in the Netherlands

Customs officials made the largest drug bust of 2021 at the Port of Rotterdam as 4,178 kilograms of cocaine was seized in the Netherlands.

According to a statement published by the Public Prosecution Service in Rotterdam, customs officials found the drugs in two containers from Paraguay, which were loaded onto another ship in Uruguay.

The cache, which has an estimated value of approximately €313 million ($362 million), was hidden inside bags full of soybeans. The statement said the beans were "destined for a company in Portugal."

Ecuadorian Authorities Seize 1.5 Tons of Cocaine Hidden in a Banana Shipment Headed for New Zealand

The power of fresh produce has once again prevailed as Ecuadorian authorities foiled a plot by criminals

to use a shipment of fresh produce to cover up their unsavory actions. As part of a drug bust operation, police were able to keep a load of bananas from falling victim to the acts of ill-intentioned offenders.

Authorities recently uncovered 1.5 tons of cocaine headed for New Zealand hidden within a shipment of bananas, coming from a warehouse in Guayas province, according to a report. In addition to seizing the container holding 3,408 lbs of cocaine hydrochloride, the officers made 20 arrests of those suspected to be involved with the operation.

Bangladesh Coast Guard seized 12 kg of cannabis and 35,000 pieces of yaba tablets

According to a tip-off, a shipment of yaba from Myanmar was reported to be in Bangladesh via the sea area adjacent to Chheradwip in St. Martin. On the basis of the received news, a special expedition was conducted under the leadership of M Naeem ul Haq.

Coast Guard members signaled a boat to stop if the boat's movements seemed suspicious. The Coast Guard members chased the boat as it quickly turned and fled. At that time the yaba trafficking gang threw a white plastic bag from the boat into the sea and fled to the Myanmar border. Later Coastguard members seized 12 kg of cannabis and 35,000 (thirty five thousand) pieces of yaba tablets from the sacks.

Man arrested for multi-million dollar migration fraud

A joint agency investigation has today

led to the arrest of a 57-year-old man from the New South Wales Central Coast for allegedly being the primary facilitator of a multi-million migration fraud. The man was arrested by Australian Federal Police members.

A whole-of-government investigation – led by the AFP and comprising the Australian Border Force (ABF), AUSTRAC, the Australian Taxation Office and Department of Home Affairs – found evidence of an alleged scheme intended to defraud legitimate visa programs. It was triggered by an ABF investigation into allegations of significant visa and migration fraud, dating to August 2019.

The man allegedly facilitated more than 130 fraudulent visa applications – focusing on the food service and regional farm worker industries – over four years, resulting in more than $2 million being gained from this activity.

Over $20 million of illicit cigarette sticks up in smoke

Investigations are underway following the detection and destruction of 18 million illicit cigarette sticks by the Australian Border Force (ABF).

Information received by the ABF international network enabled the NSW Cargo Examination Facility to successfully intercept two sea cargo consignments declared as plywood. These consignments were referred to the ABF-led Illicit Tobacco Taskforce (ITTF) for investigation.

The two consignments were found to contain a combined total of approximately 18 million illicit cigarette sticks with an excise value of over $20 million (excluding GST).

CBP Officers Seize Nearly 4,000 Bongs and $23k in Unreported Currency

CBP officers seized unreported currency while conducting enforcement operations on a Ghana-bound flight. A married couple reported to CBP officers that they possessed a combined $10,500.

While inspecting the couple's carry-on bag, officers discovered an envelope concealed behind the carry-on bag's zippered liner. Officers verified the couple's combined currency at $23,641. Officers seized the currency for violating U.S. currency reporting laws and then released the couple with $641 as a humanitarian relief.

The shipment of 3,738 glass bongs initially arrived from China manifested as "gravity pipes." Officers detained the shipment and submitted documentation and photos to CBP's international trade experts at the agency's Consumer Products and Mass Merchandising Centers of Excellence and Expertise.

CBP import specialists there reported back to officers that the shipment appraised at $56,033 and confirmed that the glass bongs violated U.S. laws on the importation of drug paraphernalia.

CYBERSECURITY CONSIDERATIONS FOR AI-BASED SYSTEMS IN BORDER MANAGEMENT

by Laura Salmela, Kirsi Aaltola, Harri Siirtola, Nikolaos Papakonstantinou and Mirko Sailio from VTT Technical Research Centre of Finland

The significance of Artificial Intelligence (AI) based technologies for improving the capabilities of border management authorities together with other disruptive technologies, such as cloud and edge computing, is hard to downplay. Indeed, technical realizations utilizing AI with all its interlinked variations and sub-disciples broaden the suite of border authorities' assets to monitor border areas with enhanced detection, classification and tracking capabilities, to maintain up-to-date and comprehensive situational picture or domain awareness, and to make timely and evidence-based decisions on follow-up procedures and the selection of suitable operative support.

AI applications are elementary

for biometric systems and further digitalization of border checks also on the document verification side. Also, advanced traveller analytics or novel risk analysis tools would struggle to go anywhere without them. AI-based systems save time and money in an often resource-scarce public domain, and they can be understood as important technical solutions for various security challenges that are daily met at Europe's external borders. And for the achievement of a future Digital Schengen Area, as envisioned in the annual conference of eu-LISA held in October 2021.

Besides welcoming all novelties just whole-heartedly, the security of AI-based capabilities has increasingly started to raise concern. In contrast to more traditional IT systems, AI-based systems are claimed as having larger attack surfaces, as they are vulnerable to traditional cyberattacks as we know them, such as hacking or Denial-of-Service attacks, and to new manipulation efforts and attack mechanisms that are distinctive to AI technologies, such as the poisoning of training data. Malicious actors may also try to craft backdoors into AI-based models that can be triggered with specific input data distorting further data analytics and decision-making during the models operative use, just to name a few. Overall, the accelerating adoption of AI applications increases their attractiveness as attack targets to various actors wanting to exploit
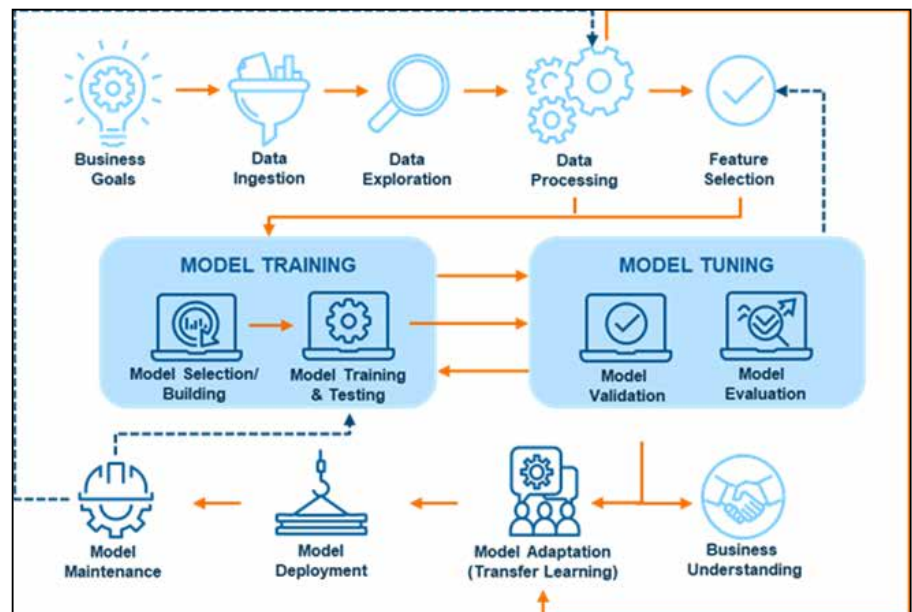

Figure 1. Generic model for AI lifecycle. Reproduced from ENISA AI Cybersecurity Challenges Report 2019.

hidden vulnerabilities in border management systems.

Recent examples of cyber-attacks, such as the Colonial Pipeline hack and the Microsoft Exchange Zero-Day attack thoroughly exemplify the level of technological sophistication and effectiveness of both old and new threats against societally critical targets or targets whose security breaches widely compromise also public administrations. As eloquently established by one author, "one could imagine AI attacks on facial recognition systems as the 21st century version of the time-honored strategy of cutting or dyeing one's hair to avoid law enforcement recognition" (Comiter 2019, p. 41). Thus, how to build reliable and trustworthy AI-based systems also from the perspective of security is a vital question that

should be examined in parallel with the technical advancements and novel discoveries in this area. Such objectives are also in line with the near-term approval and implementation of the landmark European regulation – the Artificial Intelligence Act which demands a risk assessment to be performed on high risk systems.

To comprehensively manage AI security risks, one needs to consider all lifecycle phases of the systems. According to the European Union Agency for Cybersecurity (ENISA, 2019), AI lifecycle includes 12 different stages ranging from business goal definition to model adaptation, deployment and maintenance as illustrated in Figure 1. Depending on a particular lifecycle phase, the composition of key assets, that may be affected by intentionally inflicted threats, differs.

Vulnerable assets include:

- data (e.g. raw data),
- models (e.g. algorithms),
- actors/stakeholders (e.g. data owner),
- processes (e.g. data ingestion),
- environment/tools (e.g. communication networks) or
- artefacts (e.g. access control lists).

The potential to damage or abuse critical AI-based systems is high, if purely looking at the scope and the number of already identified threats. ENISA's taxonomy describes eight high level AI threats encompassing intentionally and non-intentionally caused threats. The former includes among others nefarious activities, in which an attacker for example tries to gain unauthorized access to datasets and the data transfer process. The latter refers for example to failures or malfunctions, which may compromise the viability of an AI application. The total count of threats listed by ENISA exceeds 100 individual threats.

So, what does this mean from the viewpoint of border security and the systems within? The outcomes of any AI security risk assessment and to-be-adopted mitigation measures are deemed to be very much domain-specific, because the context eventually dictates what exactly constitutes a likely risk. To accurately map and assess asset vulnerabilities to threats, it is important to understand the complete AI ecosystem involved. Simply put, where the AI tools are developed, where they are

deployed, how their operation and maintenance is managed, and how their performance can be enhanced in the long run matching with eventual changes in future threat landscapes. Moreover, the application, role and weight of AI in different systems varies greatly, and in many systems, machine intelligence is just one piece of a complex architecture with limited repercussions to the key assets of the system or the system-of-systems although being compromised at a certain lifecycle phase. However, in any case, cybersecurity particularities brought by AI applications require attention, as reactive risk mitigation is never inexpensive. Achieving effective post-event mitigation can also be very complicated, as the identification of the real root causes of the effects may be more a matter of luck than the result of systematic, impactful diagnostics.

Let's us think of a simplified border surveillance system which implements computer vision and pattern matching as specific

application areas of Machine Learning. The imaginary system, as depicted in Figure 2, incorporates different sensors, radars and cameras mounted on stationary structures, such as unmanned surveillance towers. The system is used to monitor border areas and provide real-time situational picture between border crossing points along the borderline. As the sensors, cameras or radars detect an event, behaviour or objects of interest based on video, image, acoustic signal or thermal infrared radiation analytics, the data is transmitted to a remote command-and-control unit which processes the data for classification and potentially tracking of particular objects. Based on the outcomes of further analysis process, decisions are made about interception with human actuators, such as deployable patrol units. In this plain scenario, AI is present at multiple intersections, as the system includes an ensemble of AI-based capabilities intended for various purposes. From the lifecycle perspective, the AI-based models
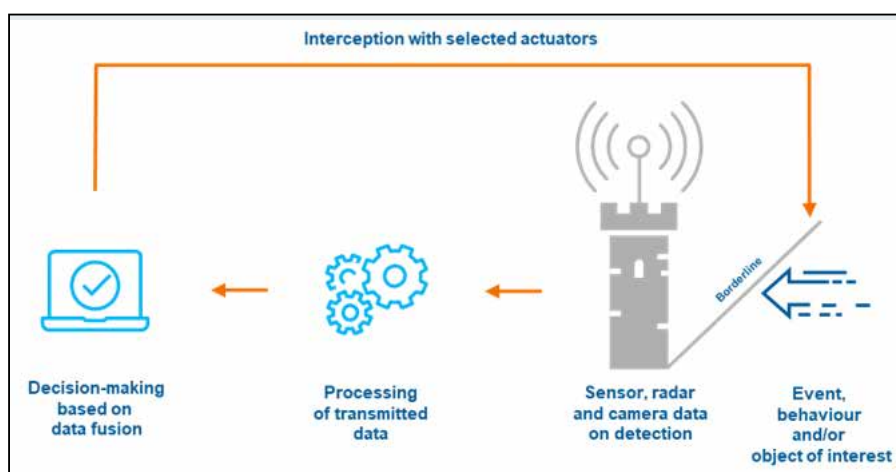

Figure 2. An imaginary border surveillance system.

are in the deployment phase, as the system is in operative use.

To manage the cybersecurity of such a border surveillance system, one does not need to look too far beyond traditional risk management repertoire for IT systems. They all apply. For example, the data transfer can be understood as a vulnerable process which may become compromised through eavesdropping, interception or hijacking of the communications infrastructure. Mitigation measures against these types of threats include among others access control, the selection of secure communication types (e.g. wireless vs wired), safeguarding data transmission with different techniques (e.g. asymmetric encryption) or employing edge computing to minimize the amount of transmitted data. Poor cybersecurity risk management that lacks a comprehensive approach will jeopardise a system's confidentiality, integrity and availability regardless of whether the system has some embedded machine intelligence or not.

However, what is interesting from the perspective of security is that how the real-time input data (regular or somehow manipulated) may negatively influence the functioning of the border surveillance system and the results of its decision-making processes. Several checklist questions follow. Have any vulnerabilities been building up along the lifecycle of the AI-based components that we are not
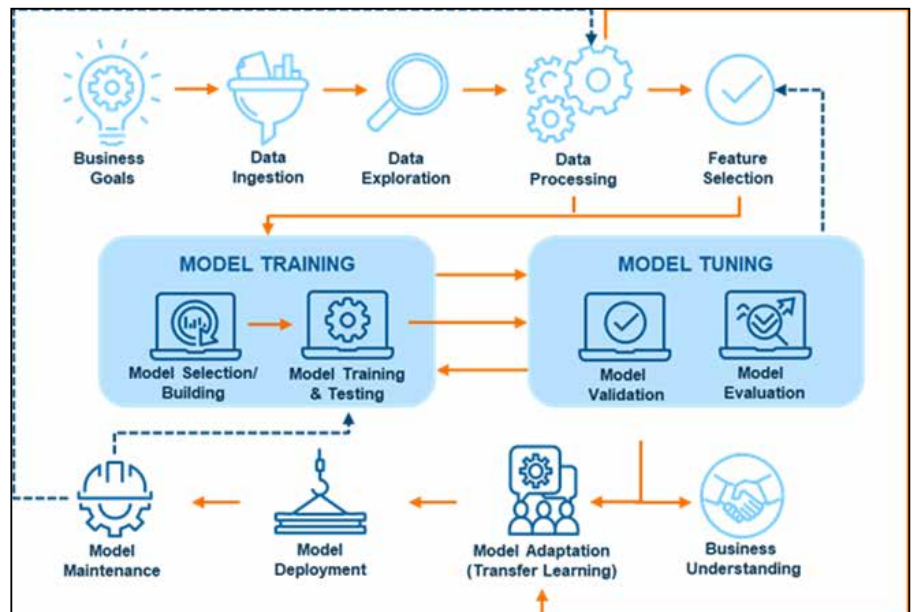

Figure 1. Generic model for AI lifecycle. Reproduced from ENISA AI Cybersecurity Challenges Report 2019.

aware of? Do the baseline models upon which the implemented AI models have been developed include some critical weaknesses? What should we know about the models' development background or environment in terms of training? What kind of documentation is available of the used data sources, data sets or data labels?

Furthermore, as the modus operandi of different actors at the borders constantly change, do the implemented models work properly against newly encountered phenomenon? How often should we retrain our system, and what is the effort required? What happens if the AI applications become inactive, suddenly slow down or start to increase faulty decision-making? Do we understand the reasons behind the malfunctions, failures or problems in reliability? And

finally, if the applications employ some degree of dynamic learning (unsupervised or otherwise), the learning may lead into unforeseen outcomes that are outside the product's original scope and objectives. Within elaborate data fusion schemes, ensuring the resilience or future-proofness of a border surveillance system can become an increasingly complex matter to manage.

European border management is based on common standards and harmonised practices ensuring that border security is enforced at the same minimum quality level across EU Member States. Although the history of AI in border security applications extends well beyond the current hype, there seems to be a clear need to exchange information and best practices on the security assurance and

Figure 3. AI-based solutions have a great potential for improving maritime domain awareness in the near-term future

threats. Building test repositories for various real-life AI applications, as proposed recently by the European Defence Agency (2020), may offer one technical solution to these challenges. Nevertheless, high level compliance policies and quality assurance methodologies reflected and verified against the security requirements established in relevant European legislation are also required.

certification of AI-based systems, and their potential interoperability requirements, when national systems are expected to fluently work and communicate with one another.

The situation is the same in multiple other domains, where information sharing on touch-and-go situations, real incidents and their prioritisation is considered as a vital means to ensure the technology's trustworthiness and to improve tools in operative use. What is additionally required, may be a change in the way of thinking about system lifecycle from development to testing and final deployment in the hands of border authorities. With AI applications, testing should be included as a continuous, repetitive process to safeguard that the procured systems work properly in altered operational contexts and at the face of new

Spain busts migrant smugglers active along the Balkan route

Spanish National Police (Policía Nacional), together with law enforcement authorities from Bosnia and Hertzegovina, Croatia, Italy, Romania and Slovenia and supported by Europol and Eurojust, dismantled a criminal network facilitating illegal immigration along the Balkan route. The suspects used vans and trucks to hide the irregular migrants while transporting them in life-threatening conditions. The operation against this criminal group took place under the Operational Task Force Crafter, set-up by Europol. The two action days in Bucharest led to 15 arrests (12 in Spain and 1 in Romania, 1 in Slovenia, 1 in Croatia).

The investigation into this criminal network started in August 2020, when Slovenia reported the arrest of a suspect intercepted while transporting 53 irregular migrants in a van. Mainly Pakistani, but also Colombian, Spanish and Romanian suspects, were among the 17 identified members of the criminal network. So far, 15 of them have been arrested: 13 during the two action days in April and May, with a further two arrested in Croatia and Slovenia. The suspect arrested in Romania is the leader of the network considered a High Value Target by Europol.

The suspects recruited mainly Pakistani migrants from locations close to refugee camps in Bosnia and Herzegovina and would transport them via van to Italy, or in some cases Spain. While transporting them through the Balkan route, the criminals used separate cars as scouts to check the route and alert the ringleaders in case of police checks. In total, law enforcement authorities detected eight migrant smuggling attempts, four of which were aborted by the smugglers due to heavy police presence. Law enforcement authorities in Croatia intercepted a truck smuggling 77 migrants in life-threatening conditions, four of whom were minors. They also detected two other vehicles carrying 47 and 21 migrants respectively. The investigators estimate that the suspects have smuggled at least 400 migrants, earning about €2 million in illegal profits.

Smuggling network up in smoke: seven arrested in Spain

A joint investigation by Spain's Civil Guard (Guardia Civil) and the French National Gendarmerie (Gendarmerie Nationale), supported by Europol, led officers to dismantle an organised crime group involved in migrant smuggling. The group is believed to have facilitated secondary movements, which is the process of moving irregular migrants from their country of arrival to another destination within the European Union. Incidence of secondary movements is growing, with new organised criminal groups forming in Europe's transit cities in order to exploit irregular migrants.

The organised crime group would firstly seek newly-arrived irregular migrants in southern and eastern Spanish coastal areas such as Murcia, Alicante, Vizcaya, Guipuzcoa, Navarra and Barcelona. The migrants arrived by boat from destinations in North and West Africa. Those irregular migrants would then be taken by road to France via former tobacco smuggling routes in Guipuzcoa and Navarra. The main destination point from there would be Bordeaux, France, with the organised crime group facilitating further illegal immigration from Bordeaux to countries across the European Union.

FROM PORTS TO AIRPORTS: EFFORTS TOWARDS AVIATION SECURITY IN IRAQ

By: Yazan Weshah, Senior Project Lead, CRDF Global

When we think about border security, we typically think of security measures at land ports of entry that dictate how people or goods enter a country. We often forget about other well-traveled ports, such as airports and seaports. Like land border stations, these ports face significant national security challenges. In Iraq, a country rattled by a history of conflict and sectarianism,

local authorities are undertaking comprehensive steps to improve security at airports and within the aviation industry.

An Evolving Security Threat

From the first commercial passenger trip in 1914 to the now ubiquitous airmail service that modernized how we send and receive parcels and shipments, countries have consistently invested

in making air travel faster, more convenient, and efficient. However, history has shown slower progress when it comes to aviation security, which has been largely reactive.

Initially, boarding a plane was a quick and convenient experience with limited security precautions involved. Unfortunately, the airline industry quickly learned the deadly repercussions of lax security measures. In 1986, Iraqi Airways flight 163 from Baghdad to Amman, Jordan, was hijacked while carrying 91 passengers and 15 crew members. After eluding security checks in the airport, the hijackers detonated two grenades in flight, which resulted in the death of over 60 people. Shortly after this attack, 259 passengers were killed when Pan Am flight 103 exploded over Lockerbie, Scotland, in 1988. Limited inspection protocols allowed a bomb to be planted on the aircraft. It changed the aviation industry forever, bringing stringent and more regulated protocols.

However, it was not until the September 11 terrorist attacks that new security protocols were introduced such as more stringent inspection of luggage and passenger belongings, expanded lists of prohibited items, and restricted access to boarding gates and other sensitive areas.

The Call for Change

Over the years, aviation security efforts have been largely spearheaded by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO). ICAO's pivotal position as the nexus for promoting standards and aviation security, airport management, and border-crossing procedures has provided the international community with a uniform body of knowledge to help sustain aviation security efforts globally. However, ICAO has faced challenges ensuring that all member states operate with the same level of safety and efficiency. Countries like Iraq with extensive histories of

conflict and instability often face more significant border threats but lack the resources and centralized authority to mitigate them.

An ongoing collaboration between the U.S and Iraq aims to solve this challenge and serve as a model for other nations looking to strengthen their aviation security. Led by the U.S. Department of State's Office of Export Control Cooperation, the Export Control and Related Border Security Program (EXBS) supports partner countries in enhancing and promoting border security to interdict and control various threats.

EXBS is partnering with CRDF Global and Iraq's Civil Aviation Authority (ICAA) to provide Iraq with the necessary guidance and mentorship to optimize its aviation security governance and infrastructure. Decades of political unrest and conflict in Iraq have weakened the country's ability to establish robust national authority, exposing the country to various threats. Aviation security has been worsened by Iraq's lack of centralization and sectarianism, resulting in fragmented agencies and governmental bodies across different ethnoreligious groups. The country's 13 airports are currently managed by various sects and administrations, leading to a lack of uniformity in aviation security standards.

The first step in strengthening ICAA authority was establishing a National Civil Aviation Security Programme (NCASP) per ICAO

requirements. While ICAA did develop a preliminary NCASP, it lacked compliance with ICAO standards and annexes. To solve this, the EXBS Program has undertaken an extensive review of ICAA's 2019 NCASP to offer recommendations concerning future enhancements, equipment procurement, and training to achieve greater compliance with the ICAO standards.

The NCASP review process was also accompanied by deploying a capability maturity model, applying an As-Is Assessment, and a benchmarking exercise so that Iraq's civil aviation security stakeholders could understand their current capability and capacity compared to regional and global aviation players. These initiatives will help Iraq meet regional and international obligations aligned to the Standards and Regulatory Practices (SARPs) as required by the ICAO and International Aviation Safety Assessment administered by the U.S. Government's Federal Aviation Administration.

Having an updated NCASP and adopting a whole-of-government approach towards aviation security will support the country in building the capacity at Iraqi airports to detect, interdict, and respond to threats and ultimately end restrictions on international travel. This could one day lead to improvements in trade, the economy, and tourism in Iraq. Such key milestones will establish Iraq as a regional champion and advocate for aviation security for other neighboring countries to follow. Prioritizing national cohesion and integration will allow Iraq to open new trade lanes to secure a sustainable investment ecosystem, ushering Iraq into a new age of greater independence and regional partnership.

Aviation security continues to mature and requires extensive attention, exchange, and communication at an international level as solutions to today's problems may become the vulnerabilities of tomorrow. Therefore, drawing from international counterparts and examples will ensure global aviation security development and growth, creating a safer border environment and prospering economies.

Border guards of Ukraine and Poland discussed a cooperation plan for 2022 in the field of cynology

One of the leading activities of the Cynological Training Center of the State Border Guard Service is international cooperation.

The cooperation of the training center with the Center for Specialized Training of the Border Guard of Poland Republic in Luban has been going on for over 10 years.

In the framework of international cooperation, Ukrainian border guards recently visited their Polish counterparts to discuss further cooperation and agree on joint training activities in 2022.

The visit took place within the framework of the international technical assistance project "Strengthening the protection of EU borders through the development of dog training, expansion, reconstruction and modernization of infrastructure", funded by the Norwegian Financial Mechanism for 2014-2021 in partnership with the Dog Training Center of the State Border Guard Service of Ukraine and Border guard Service at the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Lithuania. During the visit, the participants summed up the results of cooperation in the framework of the project and discussed the implementation of activities carried out in 2021.

Border guards of Ukraine and Poland noted the positive experience of cooperation between educational institutions. Such cooperation with European colleagues provides an opportunity to share experiences, which significantly increases the capabilities of the training center and the quality of staff training.

EU and IOM Provide Safe and Secure Transit Centre for Returned Nigerian Migrants in Lagos State

The European Union (EU) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) have commissioned a new transit center for returned Nigerian migrants in Lagos State with support from the European Union. The centre will serve as a reception point for the provision of safe, temporary accommodation, as well as ensure access to social support and specialised services to returned migrants, unaccompanied children, and Victims of Trafficking (VoTs).

The transit center has the capacity to host up to 400 migrants who can benefit from direct medical assistance, mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS), counselling, provision of food and a safe, clean, and secure location to rest. Returned migrants accommodated in the facility can stay between two and 12 nights based on their needs. During this time, they can finalise their return plans, contact their family and ensure the existence of social contacts and willingness of their family to receive them back home.

According to the International Aid/Cooperation Officer Migration, Drugs and Organised Crime of the EU Delegation to Nigeria & ECOWAS, Eleni Zerzelidou, "The European Union strongly supports dignified return and sustainable reintegration of migrants who are unable or unwilling to remain in host countries." Eleni explained further, "The launch of the transit centre is a great opportunity for the EU and IOM to familiarize

government partners with migrant protection and assistance processes involved in providing post-arrival assistance to Nigerian returnees."

Given the protection needs of all categories of vulnerable migrants, IOM has collaborated with Lagos State Emergency Management Agency (LASEMA) and the National Commission for Refugees, Migrants and Internally Displaced Persons (NCFRMI) to establish a transit center to strengthen the support system through its traditional roles of reception of returning migrants, temporary accommodation during family tracing, and reintegration.

"The main aim is to ensure a smooth transition for migrants returning to their communities of origin. IOM will provide short business skills and entrepreneurship management training to migrants willing to acquire skills before returning home and help them become more financially independent," said Prestage Murima, IOM Nigeria Programme Development Coordinator.

IOM, LASEMA and National Commission for Refugees, Migrants and Internally Displaced Persons (NCRFMI) will run the centre collaboratively, with diverse responsibilities for each entity. IOM has been facilitating the voluntary return of Nigerian migrants stranded in transit and destination countries since 2017, providing the means and skills to meet their needs once back to their local communities under the IOM-EU Joint Initiative. IOM, in collaboration with the Federal Government of Nigeria and its relevant agencies, has facilitated the reception and post-arrival assistance to more than 22,500 returnees stranded in Libya, Niger, Mali and other African countries to return to Nigeria. Out of those 18,000 returnees came back to Nigeria under the EU-IOM Joint Initiative.

Nigeria is one of the 26 countries that benefit from the EU-IOM Joint Initiative for Migrant Protection and Reintegration.

GLOBAL PEACE DAY 2021 & BORDER SECURITY

Martin Igwe is the Director Waansanigeria Media / Advocacy Centre - info@waansanigeria.org

The International Peace day was established in 1981 by United Nation General Assembly, two decade later a day was designated and globally shared for the promotion of the ideals of peace. September 21 every year Nigerians and other African countries join the Global Community to observe this very important day. The team of 2021 "Recovering better for equitable and sustainable world"

which requires demanding for humanitarian pause to Local Conflict and initiate, propagate ideas that have the capacity to help everyone recover and transform our world into one that is healthier peaceful and sustainable, this topic provoked the consciousness of the NGO Community in Nigeria on the cost effective, feasible decision capable of answering many security, peace and conflict

AFRICAN UNION ECOSOCC NIGERIAN REPRESENTATIVE DR. TUNJI JOHN ASAOLU, WAANSA NIGERIAN PRESIDENT MISS TEMITOPE LAMIDI, GUEST SPEAKER PROF. MAY NWOYE AND OTHER CSO's REPRESENTATIVES DURING INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PEACE 2021 IN NIGERIA

resolution questions in Nigeria. Terrorist groups and transnational criminal organizations, continues to illegally cross porous land and sea borders, traffic small arms and light weapons, drugs and human beings.

In the last ten years (2011-2021) and still counting, United Nation has not dedicated this important day to advance border security challenges. Covid 19 infection now global pandemic was made worse through air and land border insecurity, today many International chain and supply of goods and services which is key to Global Economic Development has been disrupted.

Challenges posed by porous border Globally are confirmed threat to development. United Nation need to liaise with counter terrorism department (UNCCT), Global counter terrorism forum (GCTF), World Border Security Congress (WBSC) and dedicate the next Global day of peace to "Border Security.

This will consolidate the effort made in the area of border security management initiatives and encourage state to recognise the importance of securing these borders and the urgent need for cross border co-operation that allows inter agency and neighbours, border security agencies and border communities need to collaborate with one another in a holistic way and understanding the fact that a multilateral, coordinated approach to border management is integral to addressing the myriad of threats and challenges each country face in quest for realization of sustainable peace. Developing frame work of action rapped with border security initiatives is a best alternative not to reduce United National day of peace to an annual international academic exercise. Peace is a key component of sustainable development, in a conflict ridden community, businesses both private and public sector activities are disrupted leading to prevalence of social problems such as poverty and inequality hence the urgency of speeding Global coordinated action and move beyond rhetorics. Doing this will be sending part of the positions of NGO Communities's resolution on recovering better for equitable and sustainable world to United Nation.

2021 WORLD BORDER SECURITY CONGRESS:

ATHENS, GREECE

October 2021 saw the latest gathering of the international border security and management community in Athens, Greece for the World Border Security Congress.

Co-hosted by:

HELLENIC REPUBLIC
Ministry of Migration & Asylum

The World Border Security Congress, co-hosted by the Ministry of Migration & Asylum, took place in the historic city of Athens from 5th-7th October, and was the first opportunity for the international community to meet since the pandemic.

A Keynote Opening Speech by the Minister of Migration, Notis Mitarachi, focused on the need for greater collaboration, the need to target organised gangs of human trafficking and reduction of illegal migration.

As well as highlighting the many challenges over the past 18 months, the Congress also demonstrated its valuable contribution to bringing the border security, migration and protection community together to share and exchange experiences and best practice, which has been made all the more important over the past couple of years.

Over 200 delegates from more than 45 countries attended, enjoying the warm hospitality afforded by the Greek hosts and beautiful city.

Further details can be viewed at www.world-border-congress.com
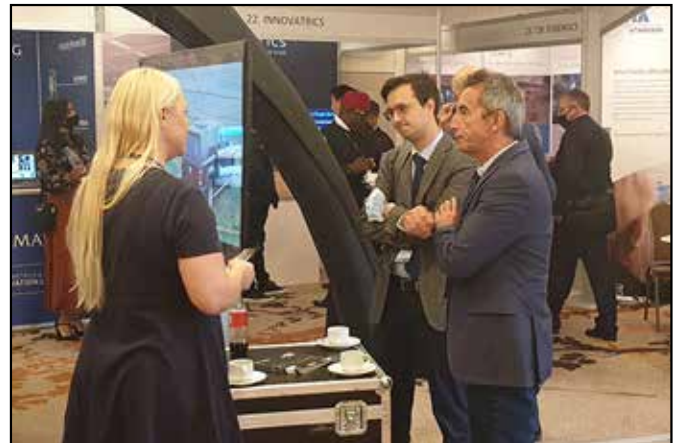
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World Border Security Congress

Partners support Foreigner Registration and Biometric Data System

Nigeria's border management system is faced with multiple challenges in the areas of facilitating travel and trade which are needed for the country's development as well as for enhancing border security. The population of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has almost tripled since its establishment in 1975 and now stands at approximately 350 million individuals.

Furthermore, Nigeria faces a huge challenge in effectively managing identities of its citizens. There is limited institutional capacity in civil registry and the country hosts a very fragmented identity management landscape which incurs significant costs to the government.

Currently, over 13 government agencies and at least three states agencies offer identity services in Nigeria. Many of them capture biometrics and issue identity cards independently without establishing links with other systems, often resulting in duplications and waste of valuable resources.

In response to those challenges, IOM and partners on identity management held a retreat on 15-17 November in Lagos, for all the agencies involved in implementing the National Biometric Identity Card (NBIC) in Nigeria to discuss and analyse the implementation status of ECOWAS National Biometric Identity Card in Nigeria. The retreat encouraged the

brainstorming among agencies to list the challenges and potential solutions that will be the seed for future approach in managing identity in Nigeria.

"The National Inter-agency and Identity Management Retreat gives an opportunity for agencies to share the current status of ECOWAS NBIC, analysing the techncial, operational and legal approaches in implementing the ECOWAS - National Biometric Identity Card in Nigeria," said in her remarks Ms. Maysa Khalil, IOM Nigeria's IBM Programme Manager.

This regional identity document, which is in tandem with the provision of the National Security Strategy (NSS-2019) developed by the Office of the National Security Adviser (ONSA), will assist Nigeria in tackling transborder security challenges bedeviling the nation and the sub-region in general.

"We shall continue engagement in the national discussion and development on the National Biometric Identity Card, said Mr. Nasiru Ahmed Principal Senior Officer from the Office of the National Security Adviser.

"It is expected that a collaborative approach between Agencies and Ministries will provide an accurate picture of the status in roll-out of the NBIC and elaborate on roles and responsibilities of relevant stakeholders," he added.

The objective of the retreat is to continue engagement in the national discussion and development on the NBIC as defined by ECOWAS. Discussions in the meeting also focused on the findings of the survey conducted in 2021 to obtain an accurate picture of the status in the roll-out of the NBIC, analyse all relevant stakeholders, their roles and responsibilities and on-going initiatives in the country such as the National Identity Number (NIN) programme and their progress status.

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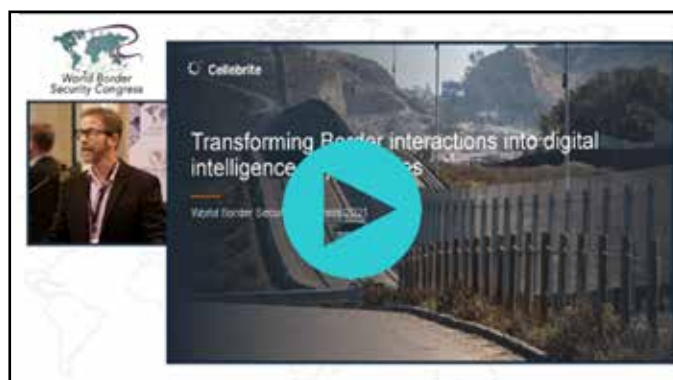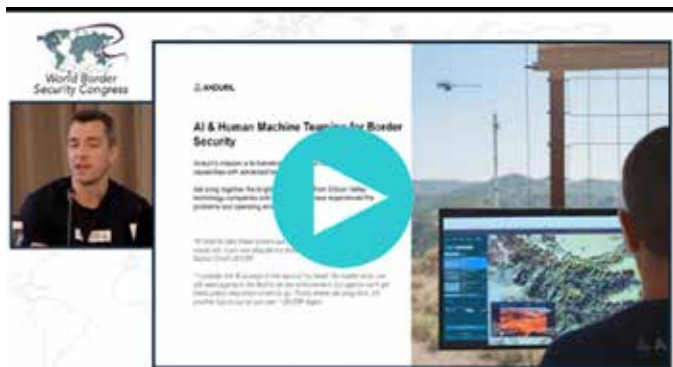ports-webinar

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Smiths Detection collaborates with Microsoft and Heathrow to develop AI tool to uncover wildlife trafficking

Smiths Detection has collaborated with Microsoft and Heathrow in the development of a first of its kind multispecies AI model designed to uncover illegally trafficked wildlife concealed in baggage and air cargo.

Initial testing of the algorithm which took place at Heathrow has shown a success rate of over 70% in identifying trafficked animals, including ivory.

As part of Project SEEKER, an extensive library of X-ray images taken from Smiths Detection's CTX 9800 baggage scanners at Heathrow were used to train the Microsoft AI for Good model. The machines can screen up to 250,000 bags a day, generating a multitude of data for inspection.

Globally, illegal wildlife trafficking is among the five most lucrative global crimes and is often run by highly organised criminal networks. Combatting wildlife trafficking could therefore cut off revenue streams to organised crime and help stop animal poaching in its tracks. Tackling the issue could also contribute to the reduction of Zoonotic diseases (animal to human) which have been recently linked to wildlife trafficking.

"The trial has demonstrated that using AI-powered technology to automatically uncover threats and contraband significantly reduces operator burden," said Richard Thompson, Market Director, Aviation at Smiths Detection.

Steadicopter unveils its unique RUAV Black Eagle 50 Electric with groundbreaking useful load weight, for electric VTOL

Steadicopter, has unveiled the Black Eagle 50 Electric – the newest model in its RUAV family – powered by electric motors, and designed for a wide range of law enforcement, border, maritime, civilian and covert missions.

The Black Eagle 50 Electric is the first electrically-powered unmanned helicopter with a maximum takeoff weight of 50 kg and useful load weight of 30 kg, comprising payload and batteries, capable of up to two hours of flight time. This enables high performance and maximum operational flexibility for both security forces and civilian applications, such as search & rescue, cyber, intelligence, gas & oil rigs, and high-end naval missions.

The electrically-powered engine has significantly reduced the weight of the air vehicle, enabling additional, much required, payload capacity for a variety of missions. With an empty weight of only 20 kg as a platform, the Black Eagle 50 Electric has the capacity to carry additional batteries for longer flights, heavier payloads, and more. With a wide range of mission payloads, the system provides the highest level of mission versatility for covert operations.

Powered by dual-electric propulsion, the Black Eagle 50 Electric is extremely cost effective, simple to operate, easy to maintain and, with no need for fuel storage, both environmentally friendly and safe.

Echodyne Awarded $20M IDIQ Contract from the U.S. CBP Innovation Team

Echodyne the radar platform company, announced today that the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS), Customs and Border Protection (CBP) Innovation Team has awarded the company a $20M indefinite-delivery/indefinite-quantity (IDIQ) contract.
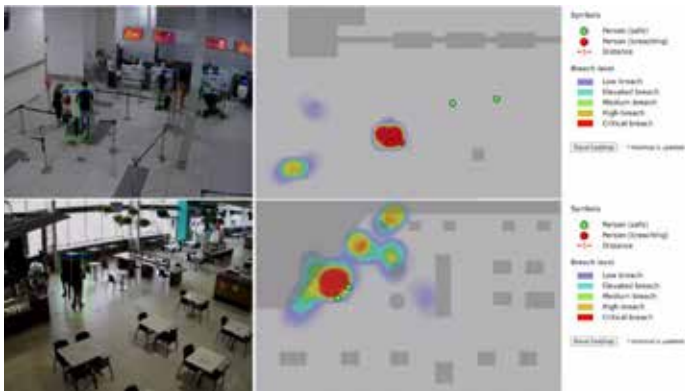
The five-year agreement enables CBP to expand deployments of Echodyne's industry-leading radars and explore new applications for the radars along the country's land and marine borders and ports of entry.

Echodyne was an early participant in the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Science and Technology Directorate (S&T) Silicon Valley Innovation Program (SVIP). Echodyne provides its technology directly to DHS as well as through an increasing number of integrators that supply systems of systems to DHS and its components.

Radars deployed in field environments enhance agent safety and provide significant intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) capabilities not previously available. Echodyne has already completed delivery of thirty (30) Echodyne EchoGuard Radar Systems under the terms of this contract.

"The award of this contract validates our position as a leader in compact, portable ESA radar systems that improve intelligence and surveillance capabilities in the most challenging defense and homeland security applications," said Eben Frankenberg, CEO of Echodyne.

SITA launches free Digital Travel Declaration solution, supporting governments in safely opening their borders

SITA announced that to support the recovery of the travel industry, it will make its Digital Travel Declaration solution – which allows passengers to share required travel and health documentation with governments ahead of travel – available to governments free of charge globally.

This is aimed at addressing the global challenge of submitting and verifying health documentation which remains a major impediment to the recovery of the global travel industry.

Recent research from IATA highlighted that of 50 countries surveyed, 38 countries had some form of COVID-19 restriction on who could enter. For many countries, economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic relies heavily on travel and tourism. According to WTTC's 2020 Economic Impact Report, in 2019 travel and tourism was responsible for one in 10 jobs, making a 10.3%

contribution to global GDP and generating one in four of all new jobs. However, inefficiencies and a lack of common standards around managing health documentation remain the single biggest obstacle to rebuilding the travel and tourism industry and supporting economic growth.

David Lavorel, CEO of SITA AT AIRPORTS AND BORDERS, said: "Making Digital Travel Declaration freely available to governments will be an investment in the recovery of our industry, and we hope will go some way towards addressing the challenges we all face today."

Entrust launches new Seamless Travel Solution

Entrust has announced its expansion to the travel industry with its Seamless Travel Solution, a fully-digital travel credential. This solution enables a touchless and seamless experience for travelers by minimizing contact points, while bringing simplicity and greater security for border control, immigration and travel service provider operations.

"Travel & Tourism is working hard to bounce back from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. WTTC's Safe & Seamless Traveler Journey is central both in aiding a swift recovery and defining a new normal for the industry," said Helena Bononi, Vice President Americas of the World Travel and Tourism Council. "This important initiative enables mobility and increases safety and security, while always putting the passenger at the center. We're encouraged by efforts from governments and industry to make this a reality. The new Entrust Seamless Travel Solution and all initiatives focusing on seamless travel are welcome additions to all current efforts."

HGH signs million-euro contract to watch and secure maritime migration routes at the border of a NATO European country

HGH announce the signing of a new million-euro contract with a NATO European country to watch the coasts and protect the border from irregular migrations, smuggling and trafficking.

A total of three SPYNEL Thermal sensors have been acquired by this European NATO country, whose coasts are regularly navigated by migrants and drug traffickers putting their lives at risk while using RHIBs and other small boats, difficult to detect by traditional security cameras. Meeting the country's coastline security concerns, SPYNEL IR Sensors operate 24/7 in all weather conditions and have already proven their efficiency in the surveillance of several international coastal borders.

HGH's Wide Area Surveillance solution based on SPYNEL Panoramic Thermal cameras and CYCLOPE Image processing and data analysis software enable coastal domain awareness with real-time 360-degree thermal videos. Simultaneous detection, tracking and identification of multiple threats and objects is guaranteed by HGH, including wooden boats, swimmers and RHIBs.

World Border Security Congress

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Developing Border Strategies Through Co-operation and Technology

SAVE THE DATES

Portugal is the westernmost state of mainland Europe, being bordered to the west and south by the Atlantic Ocean and to the north and east by Spain. Its territory also includes the Atlantic archipelagos of the Azores and Madeira. Portugal has a rich cultural heritage which is shared across the globe as a consequence of its colonial past.

Portugal has a highly developed economy and is a much-visited tourist destination. Portugal's geographical position makes it the gateway to the Mediterranean and a stopover for many foreign airlines at several airports within the country.

Portugal is also part of the Schengen area and has been an early adopter of biometrics and eGate technology.

With their experience of being in the frontline of the smuggling of drugs and illicit goods from the Atlantic, THB and economic migration challenges from Africa, Portugal is the perfect place re-convene for the next meeting of the World Border Security Congress.

The World Border Security Congress is a high level 3 day event that will discuss and debate current and future policies, implementation issues and challenges as well as new and developing technologies that contribute towards safe and secure border and migration management.

We look forward to welcoming you to Lisbon, Portugal on 9th-11th March 2021 for the next gathering of border and migration management professionals.

www.world-border-congress.com

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