BORDER SECURITY REPORT

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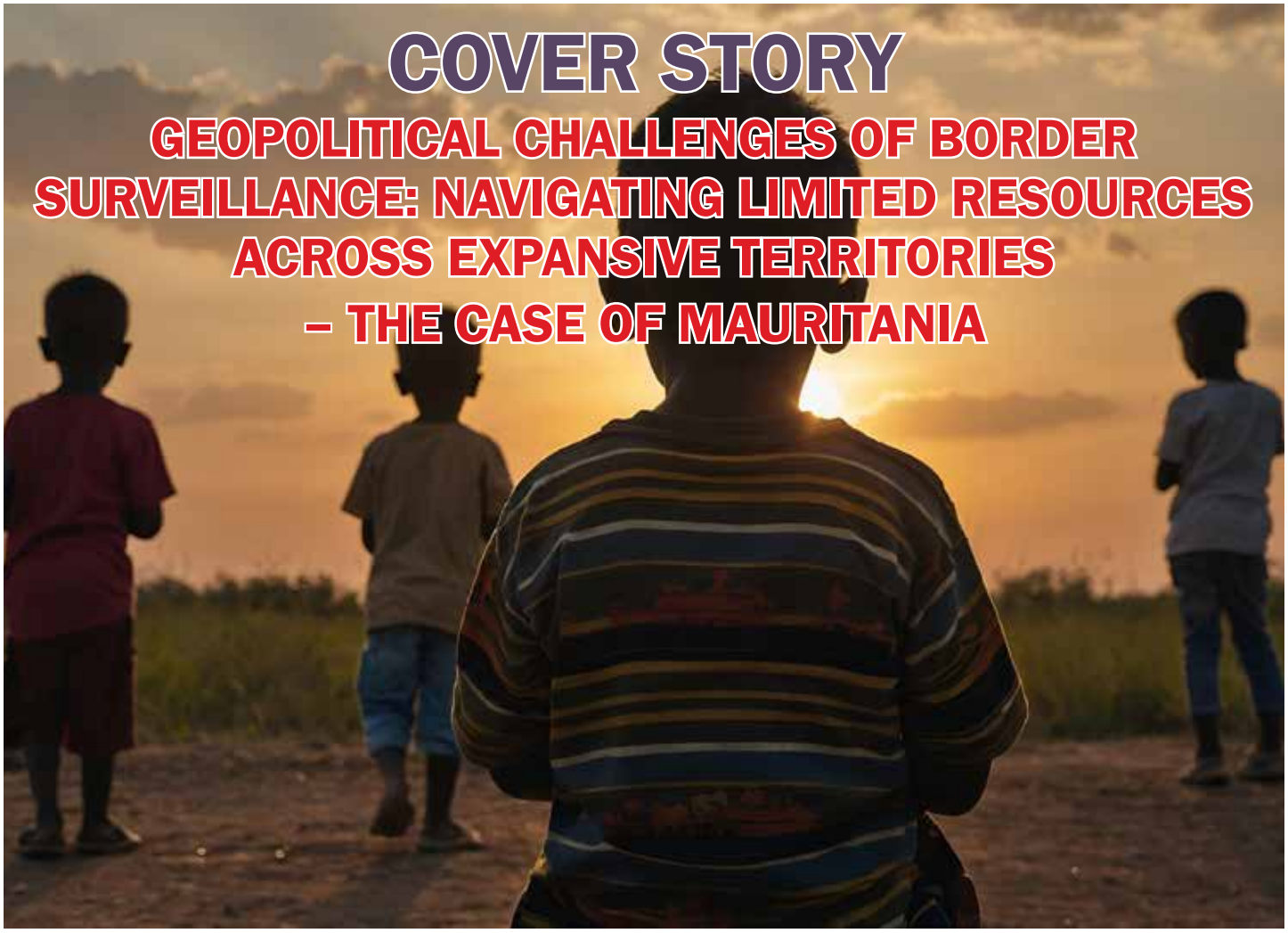
THE JOURNAL OF BORDER SECURITY AND TRANSNATIONAL CRIME FOR THE WORLD'S BORDER PROTECTION, MANAGEMENT AND SECURITY INDUSTRY POLICY-MAKERS AND PRACTITIONERS



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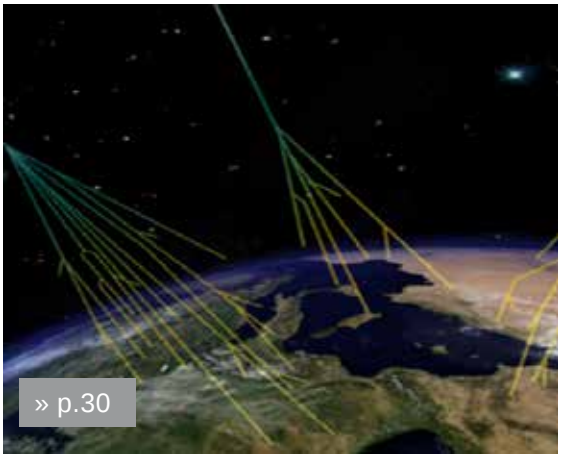
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BORDER SECURITY REPORT

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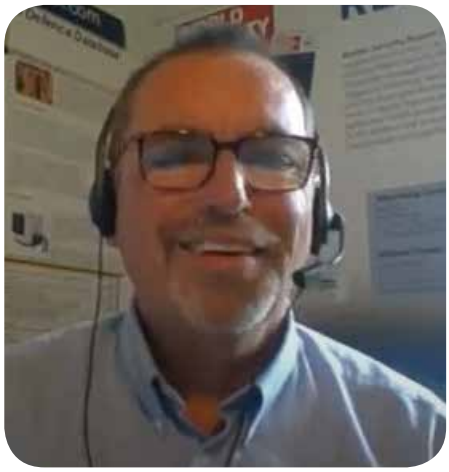
Is Technology Shifting the Balance?



As the border community gather once again for the World Border Security Congress, this time in the wonderful city of Madrid, regional conflicts, global geopolitical instability, and mass migration dominate the headlines.

The new Trump presidencies disruptive approach to these issues, as well as to trade, the environment, and global resources, has continued to upset the status quo, forcing other world leaders to rethink their approach to the same issues, almost on a daily basis.

So bewildering is the pace of change that trying to write any sort of commentary on what's happening and its possible consequences for the border community would be out of date before the ink was dry on the paper. So, I won't!

But what we can be certain about is that core issues facing the border community worldwide essentially remain the same.

Wars, political instability, climate change, and economic struggles continue to drive migrants and asylum seekers toward borders, leaving them vulnerable to exploitation. That same instability is exploited in more sophisticated ways by organised crime gangs to continue their core businesses of trafficking people, drugs, weapons, wildlife, and cultural heritage.

Bad actors are increasingly using technology to facilitate their crimes and evade detection. Tech such as encrypted messaging and burner phones are utilised for secure communication, and counter surveillance tech such as signals monitoring equipment, RF jammers and drones are routinely used to track authorities' movements, help them avoid detection, and protect their illegal activities.

But technological advances work both ways and it really feels as though we are on the edge of a technological revolution that promises to shift the advantage in favour of law enforcement in a significant way, perhaps for the very first time in history.

This will be reflected at the congress by the high tech companies exhibiting and in a number of sessions, including looking at Emerging Trends in Technology at the Border from a Government Perspective and OSINT (Open Source Intelligence) at the Border, in which we will discuss how AI can be used to leveraged publicly available data, not only to map and identify connections but also identify broader criminal networks.

So, whatever the outcome of the great power politics, it's our hope that this year's congress takes another step towards meeting our core mission, which is creating a safe space in which the border community can share the information and experience they need to help them do their job!

Tony Kingham
Editor

Refugee response has reduced risks of migrant smuggling and human trafficking stemming from war in Ukraine, new UNODC study finds

Visa-free entry, temporary protection and targeted anti-trafficking measures across Europe for refugees from Ukraine are effectively mitigating trafficking and smuggling risks, suggests a new study from the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), launched in Kyiv.

Three years has been marked since the beginning of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine. This UNODC study examines the extent and risks of trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants between February 2022 and December 2024, drawing on official data, statistics and information; available literature; a survey of over 1,600 refugees from Ukraine; and interviews with key informants and refugees.

“War – and the displacement, financial struggle and other hardships it brings – can significantly increase the risks of migrant smuggling and human trafficking,” said Angela Me, Chief of Research and Analysis at UNODC. “The rapid and large-scale displacement caused by the war in Ukraine, which forced over 6.7 million people from their country, left many highly vulnerable to these crimes. However, this study highlights that strong anti-trafficking policies and decisive, unified government action can play a crucial role in reducing that risk.”

Prior to 2022, Ukrainians were among the top nationalities of people detected as irregularly residing, refused entry by land and using fraudulent documents in the European Union (EU). Between 2019 and 2022, Ukrainian nationals also accounted for 11 per cent of all migrant smugglers detected at EU land borders.

According to the study, however, since February 2022 only five per cent of Ukrainians and six per cent of non-Ukrainians fleeing the country reported paying for services to cross borders irregularly.

Within Ukraine, since early 2022, national authorities have reported identifying fewer instances of trafficking in persons, which may also be due to reduced institutional capacity. Over 2022-2023, of 277 domestic trafficking cases investigated, the proportion involving labour exploitation (49 per cent) and forced criminal activities (21 per cent) increased – while the proportion involving sexual exploitation (29 per cent) decreased. Ukrainian children, meanwhile, have been trafficked for forced labour, begging and illegal adoption, both within Ukraine and in host countries.

EU countries hosting Ukrainian refugees recorded some increases in Ukrainians identified as victims of trafficking during 2022, though such increases occurred in a context where the population of Ukrainians in the EU more than tripled. 402 Ukrainian victims were recorded across the EU in 2022, both women and men, mostly trafficked for forced labour, though at least 25 per cent of these victims had been trafficked prior to February 2022. For comparison, 65 Ukrainian victims were recorded in the EU in 2021.

The study points to the challenges in combating trafficking in Ukraine due to the war. It highlights that Ukrainian anti-trafficking stakeholders need to be supported to identify and protect victims of trafficking, notably children, and to respond to the incidence of forced labour, forced criminality and exploitation in armed conflict, as well as sexual exploitation.

Equally important are the timely prosecution and adjudication of trafficking in persons cases. It is clear that the risks of trafficking within Ukraine require continued monitoring and further support is needed for national systems. The humanitarian and protection response should be strengthened and expanded in Ukraine, particularly for groups especially at risk of trafficking, including children, internally displaced persons and residents at accommodation centres for vulnerable groups, such as drug-users and homeless people.

GEOPOLITICAL CHALLENGES OF BORDER SURVEILLANCE: NAVIGATING LIMITED RESOURCES ACROSS EXPANSIVE TERRITORIES – THE CASE OF MAURITANIA

By Adnane KAAB, Analyst in international strategy, geopolitics and prospective, graduated from IRIS SUP Paris.

Border security in regions with vast, sparsely populated territories poses a complex challenge, particularly when these areas are vulnerable to external pressures and regional instability.

Mauritania, strategically located in the Sahel-Sahara region, faces this dilemma in the face of growing transnational threats, including terrorism, trafficking, and illegal migration. Its porous borders with neighboring countries, notably Algeria, Mali, Morocco and Senegal, further complicate efforts to maintain effective surveillance and control.

Recent events, such as the incursions by the Algerian Army into Mauritanian territory in December 2024, have drawn attention to the fragility of Mauritania's border security apparatus. These incursions, which

sparked national security concerns, underscored the challenges Mauritania faces in defending its territorial integrity against external threats while managing internal security vulnerabilities.

In response to these growing challenges, Mauritania has taken significant steps to enhance its border control by establishing 82 mandatory border crossings, including the Es-Smara-Bir Moghrein route, which is now officially recognized as one of the international crossings. This strategic move aims to strengthen border surveillance and security by providing more controlled points of entry and improving monitoring along its porous borders.

Mauritania's geographical expanse and limited resources constrain its ability to implement comprehensive border surveillance, leaving vast stretches of desert difficult to monitor. The situation is exacerbated by the country's reliance on international partnerships for military support and technological assistance, raising questions about the balance between cooperation and sovereignty.
This paper explores these issues, analyzing the geopolitical and operational challenges Mauritania faces in securing its borders, the role of external actors such as the United Arab Emirates, and the broader implications for regional stability. It aims to offer insights into the complexities of managing border security in regions where territorial disputes and resource limitations intersect.

Mauritania's geographical position is both a source of strength and a challenge. Situated at the crossroad of the Sahel and the Sahara, the country is bordered by Mali to the east 2,000 km border which connects it to the Sahel, offering opportunities for regional integration but also exposing it to the threat of terrorism prevalent in the area. The 500 km border with Algeria to the northeast leads directly to the Tindouf camps, a hub for various forms of trafficking. Meanwhile, its 1,600 km border with Morocco to the northwest, 500 km with Senegal to southwest, and 750 km of Atlantic coastline provide vital access to land and sea routes, fostering trade opportunities that appear more stable and promising by comparison. The country's extensive borders, which stretch over 5,000 kilometers, encompass vast desert and semi-arid regions, making effective border surveillance a significant challenge. In recent developments, the region has seen increasing instability, highlighted by the December 2024 incursions of the Algerian Army into Mauritanian territory, exacerbating concerns about national sovereignty and border security.

Mauritania's geopolitical position, sandwiched between key regional players such as Algeria, Morocco, and Mali, places it at the intersection of multiple security threats, including terrorism, trafficking, and illegal migration. To address these challenges, Mauritania has allocated a substantial portion of its military resources to border security. The country maintains an estimated 30,000-40,000 active-duty personnel within its armed forces, with a significant number assigned to border surveillance and protection. This allocation, however, is strained by

resource limitations, with Mauritania's defense budget hovering around 2.5% of GDP. Despite international assistance, including aid and training from regional partners, the country faces difficulties in maintaining adequate personnel and technological resources for comprehensive border control. The financial constraints, combined with the vastness of its borders, underscore the ongoing difficulty Mauritania faces in achieving effective territorial surveillance and security.

Security Challenges

Mauritania faces significant security challenges due to its strategic location in the Sahel-Sahara region, where key threats such as terrorism, trafficking (drugs, arms, and humans), and illegal migration are rampant. Extremist groups, including Al-Qaeda affiliates, exploit the porous borders with Mali, Algeria, and Morocco, further destabilizing the region. The impact of regional instability is exacerbated by cross-border dynamics, where militant activity and organized crime spill over into Mauritania's territory. Recent incursions by the Algerian Army underscore the vulnerability of Mauritania's borders, highlighting geopolitical tensions that further complicate security efforts. Additionally, Mauritania's current border surveillance capabilities are limited by technological, financial, and human resource gaps. Despite deploying significant military personnel to secure borders, the vast desert terrain and lack of advanced surveillance technology hinder effective monitoring. These challenges require innovative, sustainable approaches to border security, balancing national sovereignty with regional cooperation.

Role of Regional and International Actors

Regional and international actors play a pivotal role in shaping Mauritania's border security landscape. The UAE has emerged as a key partner, providing military aid and advanced surveillance technology to enhance Mauritania's border management capabilities. Similarly, Morocco, with its strategic location and extensive experience in counterterrorism and border security, offers valuable support, including intelligence-sharing and operational expertise. However, these collaborations are not without challenges. Algeria, a regional rival to Morocco, views Mauritania's growing ties with Rabat and other external actors with suspicion, seeing them as a threat to its own influence in the Sahel. This rivalry fuels geopolitical tensions, as Algeria seeks to assert its presence through actions like the recent border incursions. While international aid strengthens Mauritania's capacity, it also risks creating dependency, raising concerns about the erosion of national sovereignty. Balancing the benefits of external support with the need to maintain autonomy is critical for Mauritania. Moreover, navigating the rivalry between Morocco and Algeria requires diplomatic finesse to avoid becoming a battleground for competing regional interests. By carefully managing these partnerships, Mauritania can leverage international and regional

expertise to enhance its security while safeguarding its sovereignty in a highly competitive geopolitical environment.

In summary, Mauritania's border security challenges are shaped by regional instability, limited resources, and external influences. While international and regional partnerships offer crucial support, they also carry risks of dependency and geopolitical rivalry. On the second part will explore potential strategies for strengthening Mauritania's border security while maintaining national sovereignty.

Strategic Solutions and Recommendations

Strengthening Internal Capacities

Enhancing Mauritania's border security requires significant investment in technology, capacity building, and community engagement.

Advanced technologies such as drones, satellite monitoring, and integrated border management systems can provide real-time surveillance over vast desert terrains, improving response times and reducing blind spots.

Additionally, training and equipping security personnel specifically for operations in remote desert areas are essential. Specialized units could be developed to operate effectively in challenging environments, ensuring greater mobility and resilience.

Mauritania has recently taken a significant step toward improving border control by establishing 82 mandatory border crossing points, including 20 international and 62 bilateral crossings with neighboring countries. This move reinforces the idea that expanding and formalizing border crossings is key to better surveillance and control, rather than leaving vast stretches of the frontier unmonitored. The policy shift aligns with the approach advocated in this article: strategic management of border points enhances security and stability.

Community involvement is equally critical. Local communities, such as the Bidhan, Haratin, and Toucouleur in regions like Adrar, Tiris Zemmour, and Hodh Ech Chargui, possess invaluable knowledge of the terrain, which can significantly enhance intelligence-gathering efforts. Engaging these communities through partnerships and incentivized programs can build trust and encourage collaboration with security forces. For example, community watch initiatives in border villages could serve as an early warning system for detecting suspicious activities.

By leveraging technology, enhancing personnel capabilities, and fostering local partnerships, Mauritania can address key gaps in its border security framework. These measures not only improve immediate operational effectiveness but also foster a long-term security strategy rooted in collaboration and innovation, ultimately reducing reliance on external actors and strengthening national sovereignty.

Enhancing Regional and International Cooperation

Mauritania's border security challenges demand robust regional

and international collaboration. Strengthening bilateral agreements with neighboring countries is essential, particularly with Morocco, whose expertise in intelligence-sharing, operational training, and advanced border technologies can complement Mauritania's efforts. A structured partnership could include joint training programs for border security personnel and shared use of surveillance tools like drones and integrated management systems to improve efficiency across shared borders.

Mauritania has recently formalized 82 official border crossings, including 20 international points, to improve security coordination and border management. Among them, the Es-Smara – Bir Moghrein crossing stands out as a strategic point for trade and movement. This regulation marks a shift toward more structured and cooperative border governance, reinforcing the need for enhanced bilateral and regional coordination.

International support also plays a vital role. Mauritania can leverage aid and expertise from partners such as the UAE, EU, and UN to enhance technical capabilities and infrastructure. For instance, funding from the EU could be directed toward modernizing border posts, while UN-backed initiatives could focus on capacity-building programs for security forces. However, these collaborations must be carefully managed to avoid over-reliance and ensure Mauritania retains full control over its security strategies.

Further integration into regional frameworks, such as expanding Mauritania's role in the G5 Sahel, provides opportunities for joint operations and intelligence-sharing to combat cross-border threats like terrorism and trafficking. Closer coordination with Morocco on counterterrorism strategies could also enhance regional stability, given Morocco's established capabilities in this domain. By balancing internal priorities with external partnerships, Mauritania can address immediate security concerns while fostering a collaborative approach to long-term border and regional stability.

Socioeconomic Development as a Stabilization Tool

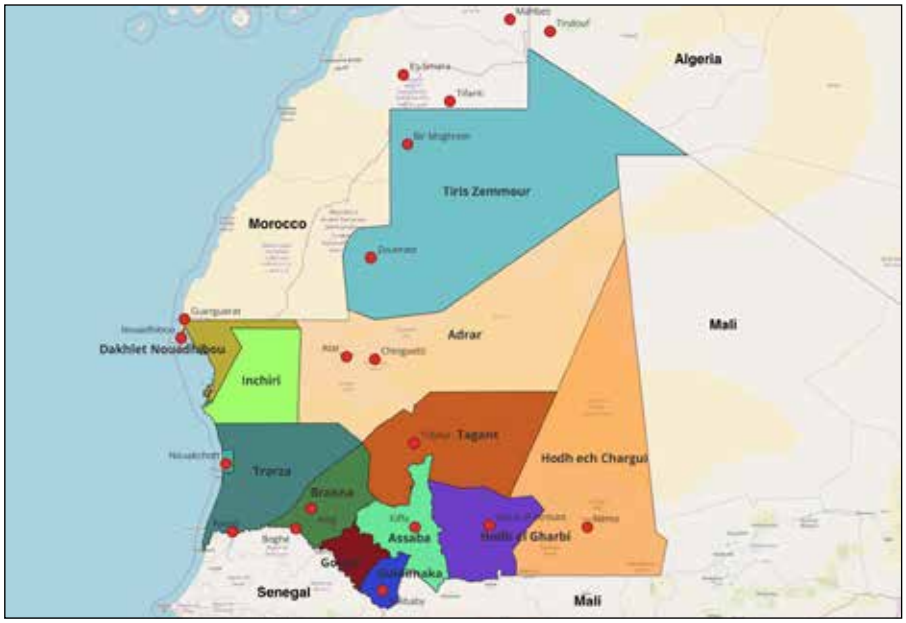
Beyond security concerns, socioeconomic development plays a vital role in stabilizing Mauritania's border regions. Investing in infrastructure, such as roads and communication networks, can improve accessibility and facilitate better surveillance and security operations. However, not all regional initiatives have yielded the expected results. Algeria's ambitious Tindouf-Zouerate corridor, announced with much enthusiasm in December 2021, was intended to strengthen economic ties with Mauritania but has since struggled to materialize, hindered by logistical and geopolitical challenges.

In contrast, Morocco has taken concrete steps to enhance regional trade and connectivity. The construction of a second commercial border crossing linking Es-Smara to Bir Moghrein—now designated as an international border point—illustrates Morocco's pragmatic approach to facilitating regional trade. The RN17 and RN17B roads, connecting Es-Smara to the Mauritanian border and spanning 93 km, are now over 95% complete. This corridor is part of the Royal Atlantic Initiative, which

aims to provide landlocked Sahelian countries with efficient access to Atlantic trade routes. By ensuring the smooth movement of goods and people, this infrastructure fosters economic resilience, reinforces Mauritania's regional integration, and promotes stability in border regions.

Development projects focused on poverty reduction and addressing the root causes of insecurity are essential for fostering long-term stability. By creating economic opportunities in remote border areas, Mauritania can reduce the appeal of criminal and extremist activities. Additionally, programs aimed at promoting trust and cooperation between the state and marginalized communities will strengthen local engagement in security efforts. Building these relationships encourages information-sharing and community-driven initiatives, which enhance the effectiveness of border control measures. In this way, socioeconomic development not only addresses immediate security threats but also contributes to sustainable peace and national cohesion.

In conclusion, strengthening Mauritania's border security requires a balanced approach that integrates technological investment, regional cooperation, and socioeconomic development. By enhancing internal capabilities, fostering regional partnerships, and addressing underlying social issues, Mauritania can build a more resilient and sovereign security framework to effectively manage its borders.



In conclusion, it follows from the above that Mauritania's border security challenges are deeply intertwined with regional instability, limited resources, and external geopolitical dynamics. While international partnerships and technological advancements play a crucial role, the country must also focus on strengthening internal capacities and fostering structured regional cooperation.

The recent designation of 82 official border crossings, including 20 international points, reflects a strategic shift toward enhanced border control. This decision aligns with broader efforts—such as the development of the Es-Smara–Bir Moghrein corridor and Morocco's Atlantic Initiative—which emphasize the critical role of infrastructure in stabilizing border areas.

By investing in border management systems, regional partnerships, and socioeconomic development, Mauritania can strengthen its sovereignty while effectively addressing emerging security threats. A comprehensive, multi-layered strategy, integrating technological innovation, local community engagement, and cross-border cooperation, will be key to securing its borders and mitigating the complex security threats in the Sahel-Sahara region.

However, as regional dynamics continue to evolve, Mauritania will need to adapt its strategy to new geopolitical shifts, technological advancements, and changing migration patterns. The challenge ahead lies not only in securing its borders but also in transforming them into vectors of economic growth and regional integration, ensuring long-term stability in an increasingly interconnected Sahel.

13 persons arrested for illegally disposing 35 000 tonnes of hazardous waste

Croatian law enforcement authorities arrested 13 persons suspected of being part of an environmental crime network. The main suspects, two Croatian nationals, are considered high-value targets by Europol and are believed to have orchestrated the illegal import of hazardous waste from Italy, Slovenia and Germany to Croatia. Instead of being properly treated and disposed of, the investigation shows that the waste was simply buried or dumped in at least three locations. It is estimated that at least 35 000 tonnes of waste were illegally disposed of in this manner, generating a profit of at least EUR 4 million for the criminals.

Abusing an infrastructure of legal businesses, the criminal network is believed to have managed the illegal trafficking and disposal of the waste from the countries of origin, mainly Italy, to the destination in Croatia. To that end, the criminal network relied on legal companies in Italy, as well as transport companies and other legitimate businesses in Italy and Croatia. Laboratory analysis shows that the illegally disposed garbage, which the criminals falsely declared as recyclable plastic waste, is legally considered dangerous waste. Croatian authorities believe that the criminal network also illegally buried and dumped medical waste from Croatian companies.

Criminal networks engaged in waste trafficking take advantage of the high treatment costs, particularly for hazardous waste. In this case, the modus operandi was to win tender procedures for the treatment of waste in Italy by offering lower prices compared with other providers on the legal market. Upon winning a contract, the Croatian-led criminal network would transport the waste – without any previous mandatory treatment – to Croatia. To circumvent the necessary consent of the destination country, the criminals would falsify documentation to declare the waste as merely destined for recycling, thus veiling its true nature. By disposing of medical or hazardous waste in Croatia without having treated in any way, the criminal network saves the costs associated with this procedure and pockets the difference.

Waste trafficking is an illegal activity that allows criminal networks to obtain huge profits while exposing themselves to comparatively low risk. Illegal disposal of waste often causes irreparable damage to the environment, polluting soil, water, and air. These crimes usually go hand in hand with the falsification of documents, or financial crimes such as money laundering or corruption. During the action day, officers on the scene seized electronic devices, mobile phones and documents, which will be subject to further investigation.

Nearly 20,000 live animals seized, 365 suspects arrested in largest-ever wildlife and forestry operation

Nearly 20,000 live animals, all endangered or protected species, have been seized in a global operation against wildlife and forestry trafficking networks, jointly coordinated by INTERPOL and the World Customs Organization (WCO).

Operation Thunder brought together police, customs, border control, forestry and wildlife officials from 138 countries and regions, marking the widest participation since the first edition in 2017.

Authorities arrested 365 suspects and identified six transnational criminal networks suspected of trafficking animals and plants protected by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). Such species are illegally trafficked to meet specific market demands, whether for food, perceived medicinal benefits, “luxury” and collector items or as pets and competition animals.

The live animals, which included big cats, birds, pangolins, primates and reptiles were rescued in connection with 2,213 seizures made worldwide.

Where possible, wildlife forensic experts collected DNA samples before transferring the animals to conservation centres, where their health was assessed while awaiting repatriation or rehabilitation, in line with national frameworks and relevant protocols.

The collection of DNA is a crucial part of supporting prosecutions, as it helps confirm the type of species and its origin or distribution, shedding light on new trafficking routes and emerging trends.

In addition to the live animals, participating countries seized hundreds of thousands of protected animal parts and derivatives, trees, plants, marine life and arthropods.

Timber cases represent the most significant seizures, primarily occurring in sea cargo container shipments, while most other seizures took place at airports and mail processing hubs.

Authorities also investigated online activities and found suspects using multiple profiles and linked accounts across social media platforms and marketplaces to expand their reach.

More than 100 companies involved in the trafficking of protected species were also identified.

BORDER SECURITY REPORT

BORDERFORCE - A FLEXIBLE SYSTEM EXTENDING AUTOMATED BORDER SURVEILLANCE FUNDED BY EU HORIZON PROGRAMME

The EU has experienced a surge in fixed border surveillance solutions, including physical barriers, covering 13% of external land borders. The BorderForce project, funded by the European Union under the Horizon Europe Framework Programme for Research and Innovation and officially titled “Flexible System Extending Automated Border Surveillance by Increased Situational Awareness Adaptable to Uncertain Times with Unforeseen Events” responds to evolving threats by enhancing real-time surveillance capabilities. It introduces a dynamic system, featuring self-sufficient, transportable Command and Control (C2) Stations with configurable and extendable capabilities. These stations incorporate versatile surveillance towers with anti-drone features, integrating data from autonomous monitoring sensors and UAV systems. Dedicated satellite resources, including CubeSat, strategically positioned at high-risk spots, ensure frequent revisits to critical areas. To enable early threat assessment, BorderForce leverages Open-Source Intelligence (OSINT), processing online data for border security threats.

BorderForce At-a-glance

The project emphasizes ethical, legal, and social aspects, safeguarding fundamental rights in border surveillance capability development. BorderForce collaborates with the EU and candidate countries border authorities, customs, and Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP) entities. It defines scenarios, gathers architecture feedback, and validates end-user feedback. The project emphasizes data exchange, novel user interfaces (e.g., XR), and immersive training for collaborative

threat assessment, promoting safety and security while upholding fundamental rights. This solution enhances resource sustainability by improving the coordination and deployment of reusable security measures. The BorderForce solution will be validated in two field trials and ensures seamless operations in monitoring the flow of goods, people and information.

By addressing challenges like migration, smuggling, and geopolitical tensions, BorderForce contributes to regional stability, particularly in times of crisis. Overall, it combines technological innovation and international collaboration to bolster border security, prioritizing fundamental rights and ethical considerations.

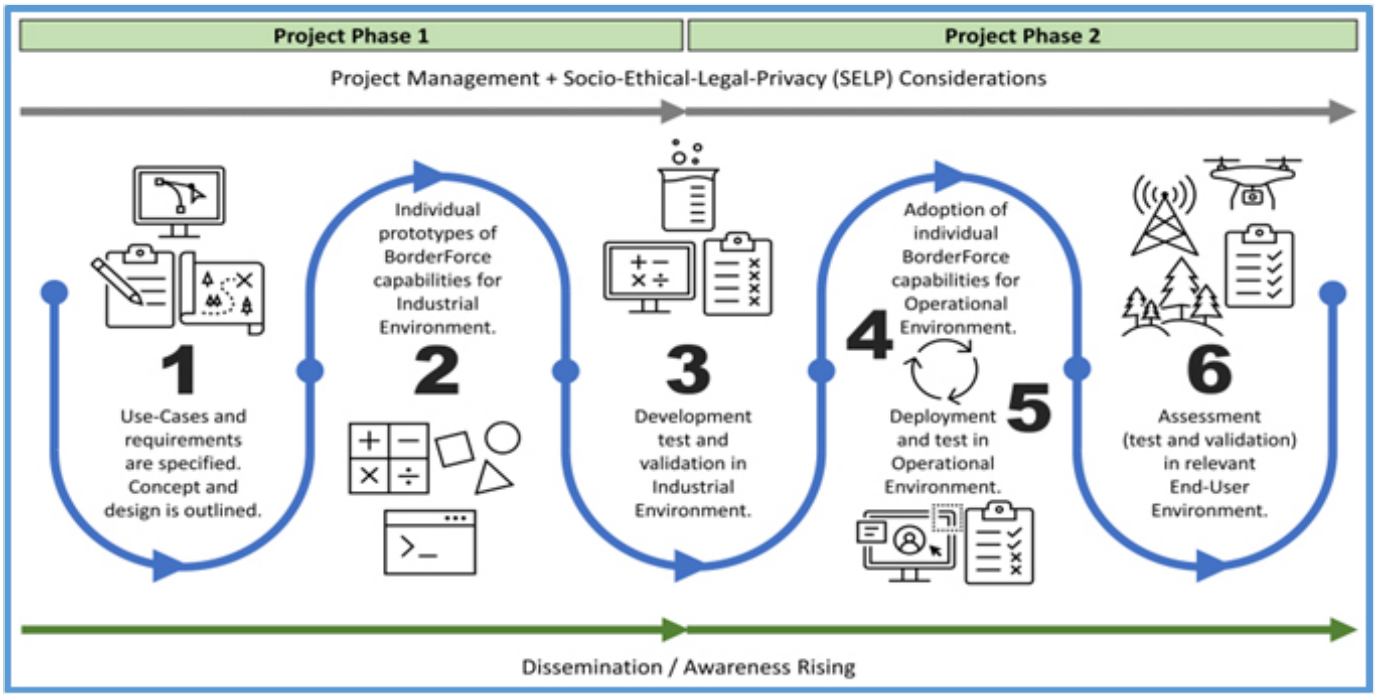
To better serve BorderForce vision and amplify chances of achieving desired results, a consortium of 16 partners from 13 European countries - Albania, Austria, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Finland, Germany, Greece, Luxembourg, Lithuania, Moldavia, Romania, Slovakia and Spain – was created while Project coordinator is the Austrian Institute of Technology (AIT). The project commenced on November 1, 2024, and has a duration of 30 months.

BorderForce key challenges

Project's key challenges include the dynamic levels and types of risks across multiple border sections that need to be monitored 24/7, each with differing environmental, vegetational, population, and climatic/ weather conditions. The lack of situational awareness arises from the absence of integration between various existing capabilities and assets, preventing a unified system. To address this, a robust and flexible system is required, which should be scalable and easy to deploy while enabling collaborative situational awareness. This system would support relevant authorities by providing the ability to rapidly deploy intervention troops and/or Border Police Teams to risk-assessed areas.

BorderForce capabilities

Project's capabilities include a mobile and deployable C2 station integrating AI-based detection for autonomous optical edge sensing and (anti-) UAV functionalities. The target objects for threat assessment include persons, vehicles, animals, vessels, and UAVs. The system also utilizes Low Earth Orbit (LEO) satellites, Cubesats with high revisit times, and Copernicus satellites, along with Copernicus Contributing Missions (CCM) to gather crucial data.



Additionally, the system employs drone swarm sensing with sophisticated flight plan updates while an OpenSource Intelligence (OSINT) platform is used to derive threat indicators relevant to border regions. The system also features an autonomous UAV-aided mesh wireless communication network, managed through RPAS and VTX Mesh, enabling seamless data exchange in challenging environments.

Data fusion is carried out on features extracted from sensor data and the OSINT sub-system. This process produces geo-referenced risk indicators for the end-users, preserving geolocation information, which is crucial for informed decision-making.

BorderForce approach

The approach which is presented in the image below focuses on enhancing, developing, and integrating technologies and processes for land border surveillance across small (200m) and larger areas (up to 20km), addressing diverse environmental conditions and weather scenarios. The system combines various sensors and detection technologies, intelligently fusing them into georeferenced risk indicators, which are visualized through a deployable C2 system, tailored for SUVs. A simple, web-based decision-making user interface is designed for various end-users, supplemented by an innovative XR-based approach to enhance operations and system setup.

The approach follows a two-phase strategy, progressing from TRL5 in an industrial environment, through operational testing and updates in a "friendly" practitioner environment, ultimately reaching TRL7 in the end-user environment. The solution will be tested in two field trials: one in Bulgaria (CDBP infrastructure) and another in Lithuania (SBGS and LRM infrastructure), with pilot use cases focused on irregular migration and smuggling in both small and large areas.

Finally, the approach includes ground truth data production for training AI models and annotation, along with benchmarking the system based on an agreed assessment methodology, involving multiple authorities to ensure internal and external security. An ethics assessment will be conducted throughout the project, ensuring compliance with the AI Act.

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30 arrested in crackdown on Chinese human trafficking ring in Spain and Croatia

A sophisticated Chinese criminal network involved in illegal immigration and human trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation has been dismantled following a complex cross-border investigation coordinated by Europol.

law enforcement conducted raids at 14 properties across Barcelona (4), Madrid (9), and Toledo (1) in Spain, and one property in Zagreb in Croatia. These operations resulted in 30 arrests, among which were the leaders of the criminal network. In addition, EUR 180 000 in cash was also seized, alongside weapons, 70 passports, equipment to falsify passports and visas, narcotic substances, 10 high-end vehicles and 33 mobile phones. A total of 33 victims – Chinese and Vietnamese nationals – were also safeguarded.

The criminal organisation, composed primarily of Chinese nationals, profited significantly from the sexual exploitation of vulnerable women. To maximise profits, the group engaged in additional criminal activities, including document fraud, money laundering, and the facilitation of illegal immigration.

Trafficking in the fast lane: French-Spanish drug trafficking ring dismantled

A sophisticated drug trafficking network smuggling large quantities of narcotics between Spain and France has been dismantled following a major law enforcement operation. Operation CABRAS, led by the French Gendarmerie under the supervision of the Specialised Interregional Jurisdiction (JIRS) of Rennes, targeted a criminal syndicate responsible for importing cannabis resin, cocaine, and synthetic drugs into France via Spain.

The investigation uncovered a highly structured organisation using sophisticated methods to transport and conceal drugs. The traffickers operated from a logistical base in southern Spain, where they stored and prepared drug shipments before smuggling them into France. Their modus operandi relied on convoys with lead and carrier vehicles equipped with hidden compartments to smuggle the drugs and evade detection. To further secure their operations, the network used counter-surveillance tactics and frequently changed routes and vehicles.

14 arrested in hit against money laundering gang in Portugal and Spain

Europol has supported a cross-border operation led by Spanish authorities and involving law enforcement from Portugal against the members of a criminal network, mainly Russian nationals, who provided money-laundering services to other EU-based gangs. The ring had already laundered more than EUR 1 million since the beginning of the investigation.

Suspects mainly operated in Spain, used the Hawala method to move the cash sourced mainly from drugs trafficking, and launder the funds collected relying on their own company networks. Investigators believe the gang were carrying out daily cash transactions, occasionally reaching up to EUR 300 000 per day.

Throughout the investigation, Europol experts provided analytical support to national authorities. A specialist was also deployed during the action day to work hand-on-hand with investigators on the spot and assist them in the extraction of data and further analysis.

Nigerian agencies unite to combat organized crime with support from INTERPOL and AFRIPOL

In a major blow to organized crime, 12 different Nigerian law enforcement agencies, supported by INTERPOL and AFRIPOL, have launched a sweeping operation that has resulted in the arrests of 36 individuals and seizures worth USD 3 million.

Following two months of preparation, national authorities carried out increased border checks, targeted raids at identified hotspots and followed up on actionable leads over five operational days. Most arrests were made for cyber-enabled fraud and the vast majority of the detained suspects were under the age of 35, reflecting a trend of greater youth involvement in organized crime.

Among the crimes uncovered, common tactics included 'romance baiting', in which criminals cultivate online relationships to manipulate victims into investing or transferring their money; investment and cryptocurrency scams, where perpetrators lure victims in fictitious financial schemes; and celebrity scams, which involve the impersonation of well-known figures to solicit money from fans.

INTERPOL border operation nets 45 arrests, seizures worth millions

An INTERPOL-coordinated border security operation in West Africa has resulted in 45 arrests and the seizure of drugs, counterfeit medicines, and stolen vehicles worth millions of dollars.

Operation Screen West Africa 2024 brought together law enforcement agencies from 12 West African countries to strengthen border security and disrupt transnational organized crime networks.

The operation notably led to the detection of a suspected Islamic State member at the Mali-Niger-Burkina Faso tri-border area and thwarted the plans of a North African suspect planning to transit through Europe to join ISIS in Syria.

37 terror suspects arrested in East African operation

An international counter-terrorism operation in East Africa has led to the arrest of 37 suspects and the seizure of both small arms and heavy weapons. Those arrested include suspected members of ISIS, Al Shabaab and several foreign terrorist fighters.

Arrests were made across eight East African countries during a joint INTERPOL and AFRIPOL operation (November-December 2024) aimed at identifying and arresting suspects with links to terrorism and strengthening key border controls.

In Kenya, police arrested 17 people including two suspected ISIS members, several foreign terrorist fighters and others involved in terrorism financing, radicalization and propaganda.

Police in the Democratic Republic of Congo arrested four alleged members of the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) and two associates. Forces also seized and destroyed a missile and anti-tank device abandoned by suspected terrorists.

OSCE welcomes Spain's anti-trafficking efforts, urges a comprehensive law and better victim identification and protection

The OSCE Special Representative encouraged authorities to develop a new National Anti-Trafficking Action Plan (NAP) with survivors' input and adopt a comprehensive anti-trafficking law aligned with Spain's international commitments. She praised the "accreditation" of trafficking victims by NGOs and recommended introducing a formal National Referral Mechanism (NRM) following the "social path" approach. This would allow for more effective victim identification beyond law enforcement and comprehensive assistance for all victims, independent of their co-operation with criminal justice processes. She offered her Office's support in reviewing the draft law and assisting with a new NAP and NRM.

OSCE delivers training course on airport security and provides equipment to Moldovan border police

The course enhanced the participants' expertise in overseeing and monitoring the implementation of aviation security measures, equipping them with essential competencies aligned with international standards. Sessions covered topics critical to the role of aviation security managers, including threat and risk assessment methodologies, crisis management, duties of security managers and supervisory activities.

"At a time when aviation security faces increasingly complex challenges, this training course underscores the importance of equipping aviation security managers with necessary skills and knowledge to address them effectively. The OSCE remains committed to supporting Moldova in strengthening its aviation security framework and fostering regional co-operation to ensure safety for all," said Ambassador Kelly Keiderling, Head of the OSCE Mission to Moldova.

Throughout the week, the participants engaged in practical exercises, case studies and discussions focused on integrating the International Civil Aviation Organization standards and recommended practices into daily operations.

OSCE Mission to BiH Conducts First Anti-Trafficking Simulation-Based Training in Bosnia and Herzegovina

The OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina (Mission) organized an advanced training for anti-trafficking practitioners, engaging them in real-time simulated scenarios to identify and investigate human trafficking cases and assist trafficked persons using a victim-centered and human rights-based approach.

Participants from law enforcement, the judiciary, labor inspection, social services, and non-governmental organizations collaborated in multidisciplinary teams to investigate simulated cases of labor and sexual exploitation, as well as forced criminality. The exercises were designed using expert-developed scenarios that reflect national human trafficking and migration trends in BiH, building on previous OSCE simulation-based training models.

OSCE
Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

IOM Raises Alarm Over Displacement of Hundreds of Thousands in Goma, DRC

The IOM is deeply concerned about the hundreds of thousands of civilians displaced in Goma, North Kivu Province, eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo

(DRC). An upsurge in heavy fighting and violence in recent days has forced people– some already previously displaced – out of their homes. IOM is appealing to the international community to recognize the staggering scale of the crisis, and to support the humanitarian needs of those displaced.

"Millions of people were already displaced by years of conflict in eastern DRC, and humanitarian needs were massive. With the current alarming upsurge in fighting, an already dire situation is rapidly becoming very much worse," said Amy Pope, IOM Director General. "IOM joins the UN Secretary-General's call for an immediate cessation of hostilities and full humanitarian access, so that we can rapidly scale up our response and ensure that life-saving aid reaches those in need."

IOM Statement on Rising Demands for Return Assistance

The IOM welcomes the United States' commitment to resuming life-saving humanitarian activities. Secretary Rubio's decision reinforces U.S. leadership in global humanitarian response, bringing stability and structure to complex displacement challenges.

Amid rising demand for return assistance across Latin America and the Caribbean, IOM is expanding efforts to help migrants return home, reintegrate, and rebuild their lives. In Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, and Panama, IOM has resumed its regional Assisted Voluntary Return (AVR) programs, providing urgent support to vulnerable migrants who are unable or unwilling to remain where they are and need help to return home safely and with dignity. Working closely with governments and humanitarian partners, IOM ensures that returns are voluntary, sustainable and managed in a safe, orderly, and dignified manner. Recent weeks have seen a sharp increase in AVR requests, underscoring the program's crucial role as a lifeline for stranded migrants.

IOM, Partners Appeal for USD 81 Million to Assist Over One Million Migrants in Horn of Africa, Yemen, and Southern Africa

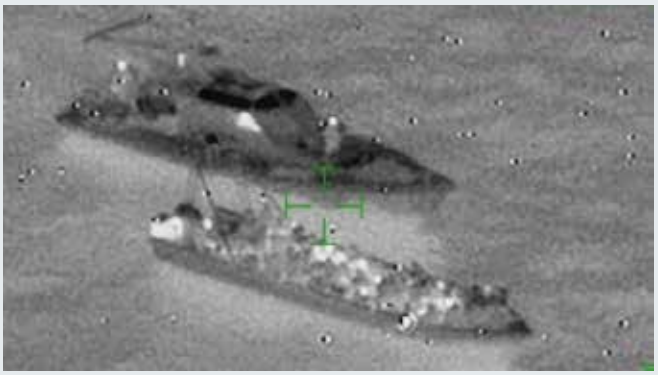
The IOM and 45 humanitarian and development partners are appealing for USD 81 million to provide lifesaving humanitarian assistance to over one million migrants — including women and children — and the communities that host them in Djibouti, Ethiopia, Somalia, the Republic of Tanzania, Kenya and Yemen. The funding request falls under the Migrant Response Plan for the Horn of Africa to Yemen and Southern Africa (MRP), coordinated by IOM.

Hundreds of thousands of migrants embark each year on dangerous irregular journeys, primarily from Ethiopia and Somalia, aiming to reach Gulf nations including the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia via Djibouti and Yemen. On another route, migrants travel through Kenya, Tanzania, and other Southern African nations, with the hope of reaching South Africa.

These perilous and life-threatening journeys are largely taken by migrants who are desperately searching for work because of grinding economic hardship and poverty, and in some cases because of violence and political instability at home. Also, climate shocks and disasters are increasingly becoming a migration driver.

INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION FOR MIGRATION
IOM·OIM
THE UNITED NATIONS MIGRATION AGENCY

Saving Lives in the Central Mediterranean



A Swedish patrol boat participating in a Frontex operation in Italy played a critical role in a life-saving mission. The vessel intercepted a fiberglass boat packed with 58 migrants, none of whom had life jackets, putting them in immediate danger. With air support from a Frontex plane, all individuals on board were safely rescued. In addition to operational efforts, Frontex continues to support Italian authorities in identifying and dismantling smuggling networks responsible for these perilous journeys.

EU external borders: Irregular border crossings fall 22% in January

The number of irregular border crossings into the European Union fell to just over 13,400 in January, marking a 22% decrease compared to the same month last year.

Despite this overall decline, the Central Mediterranean route saw an increase in activity, although the increase also highlights the very low figure a year ago.

Despite a 34% decline from a year ago, the Western African remained the most active migratory route with 4,740 of arrivals in the first month of 2025. The largest share of the irregular migrants came from Mali, Morocco and Guinea.

In January, the Eastern Mediterranean was the second most active route for arrivals in the European Union, with almost 3,500 arrivals. Yet it recorded a 21% decrease in detections compared to the same month last year. The Central Mediterranean route saw the biggest rise in arrivals of 43% (year-on-year) to 3,275.

Frontex launch of new operational command structure in Greece and Cyprus

Frontex has reached a significant milestone and reinforced the cooperation with Member States towards a stronger and more effective operational command structure in Greece and Cyprus.

Together with high-ranking participants from the Hellenic Police: Hellenic Coast Guard Lieutenant General Dimitrios Mallios, Deputy Chief Tryfon Kontizas and Assistant Chief of the Police for Cyprus Border Protection Marios Christophides, Frontex Deputy Director for Operations, Lars Gerdes, officially launched, during a festive ceremony, the new Contingent 2 in Alexandroupolis.

This Contingent, covering operational activities in Greece and Cyprus under the Frontex Chain of Command, marks a new step in Agency development. The Frontex Contingent Commander oversees all the activities carried out as part of Joint Operation Greece and Joint Operation Cyprus. The Contingent is divided into four sections — three in Greece and one in Cyprus — comprising 28 operational groups across land, sea, and air domains in both countries.

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DEVELOPMENTS IN MARITIME SURVEILLANCE SYSTEMS AND TECHNOLOGY

By Tony Kingham, Editor, Border Security Report

Securing our maritime borders is undoubtedly the most complex and difficult challenge faced by any agency tasked with the responsibility.

Firstly, our seas and oceans are often difficult and dangerous environments in which to live and work and simply maintaining a human presence at sea takes its toll on vessels, equipment and the people needed to operate them.

Then of course there are the thousands and thousands of kilometres of coastline and millions of square kilometres of seas and oceans to be surveilled and patrolled.

So of course, it's not surprising given the difficulty of securing maritime borders that bad actors are going to use these historic superhighways to trade in drugs, weapons, illicit goods and as well as human beings.

Until relatively recently all the advantages were held by the traffickers. They could hide their contraband in plain sight by

smuggling a cargo in vessels such as commercial freighters, fishing boats, yachts and pleasure craft, relying on their apparent innocence and the sheer volume of traffic to be checked, to get their cargo into a target country. Or they could use the covert approach, utilising high speed craft, such as ribs, jet skis, and more recently, drones and submersibles to unload their cargo in some remote location, away from the authorities and prying eyes.

They always had advantage of choosing when, where, and how, leaving the authorities to be reactive and cover all possible routes in, with limited resources. And when you have to be everywhere, you are strong nowhere!

But technology promises to shift the balance measurably in favour of the law enforcement, probably for the first time in the history of smuggling.

Satellites

Satellites both for communication and earth observation surveillance are among the most significant developments.

Communication satellite constellations like the Musk owned Starlink, makes broadband data communication cheaply available at sea, which means that ground stations, vessels and airborne assets can share operational data in real time.

The Airbus' Pléiades Neo constellation is already twice daily monitoring vast tracks of the

ocean and littoral, able to track and monitor vessel movements and spot anomalies like commercial vessels trying to avoid detection by disabling their Automatic Identification System (AIS) transponders.

Starlinks stablemate, SpaceX Starshield low orbit satellites are promising to be equally disruptive in the earth observation market, offering target tracking, optical and radio reconnaissance at very affordable cost. With SpaceX said to be planning to deploy thousands of Starshield satellites, providing the kind of blanket coverage we already get from Starlink, could mean that 24/7 over the horizon observation becomes a reality.

Unmanned Systems

Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) or drones are already part of the modern maritime surveillance network but are set to play an ever-larger role in securing our maritime and coastal domains.

The U.S. Customs and Border Protection (US CBP) have led the way operating a maritime variant of the military grade MQ-9 Predator B Unmanned Aircraft System (UAS) called the Guardian.

In Europe, Frontex (European Border and Coast Guard Agency) employs a variety of drones to enhance border surveillance and maritime patrol operations. In January, Frontex signed a new 184-million-euro framework contract for long-range drones, under which it has renewed a contract with Airbus to operate Heron 1 (from IAI).

The European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA) contracted Schiebel to support multi-purpose maritime operations with its Unmanned Air System (UAS) CAMCOPTER® on a wide variety of missions in the seas

all around Europe.

And in the English Channel, UK Border Force operate Tekever Drones and Thales Watchkeeper WK450 to detect illegal crossings.

Drones, whether they are long endurance fixed wing, rotary drones ideal for operating from vessels at sea, or tethered drones operating from just about anywhere, really do offer beyond the horizon capability.

Systems

Modern radars large or small are more capable than ever, able of detecting even inflatables and wooden craft. The small size of some systems like the Echodyne's MESA® means that they themselves can be fitted to small fast vessels like ribs, making interdiction that much more effective.

Electro-optic and thermal imaging systems like the Teledyne's SeaFLIR® 240-EP advanced maritime surveillance system leverages a number of technology enhancements, such as the ability to support Aided Target Recognition (AiTR) via FLIR's neural network target classifier.

Sonar technologies with wideband systems offer high-resolution imaging, improving the detection of underwater objects and potential threats. Synthetic Aperture Sonar (SAS) technology provides detailed three-dimensional images of the seafloor, aiding in the identification of illicit activities like under water drug cache' and canisters (so called torpedoes) welded to ships hulls.

Autonomous Mobile Surveillance Towers

Portable, solar-powered surveillance towers have changed the way border agencies can respond to emerging threats. Equipped with cameras, radar, thermal imaging, and communication antennas, they can operate autonomously, feeding data into centralized systems for real-time analysis. Systems such as DefSecIntel's Mobile autonomous surveillance platform SurveilSPIRE, with a built-in AI detection software and autonomous energy source, to conduct fully automated operations in different weather conditions. It is lightweight high surveillance platform, which doesn't require field operators, ideal for rapid deployment to remote coastal locations.

AI and Data Fusion

And of course, no article about future border technology would be complete without talking about AI, Machine Learning and Data Fusion.

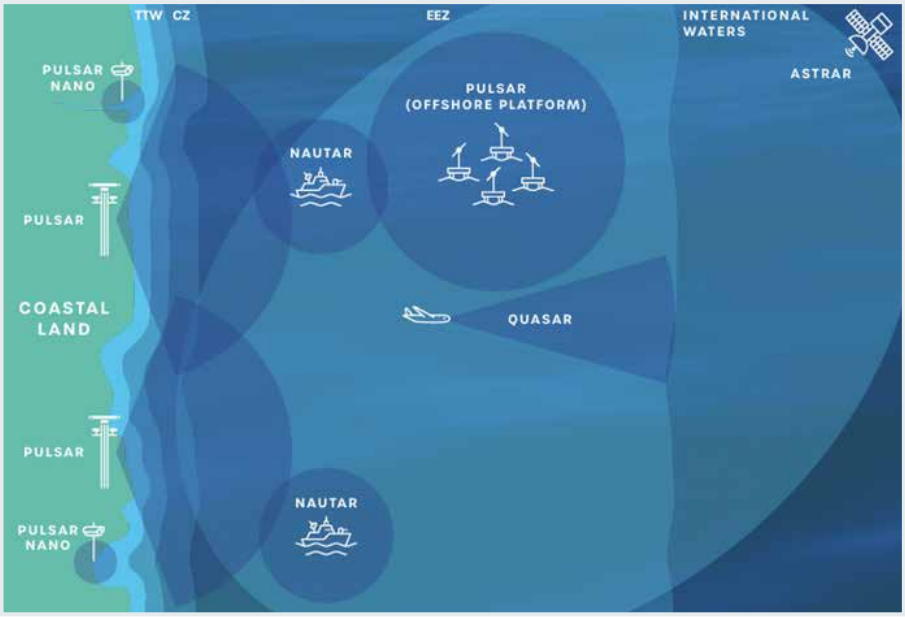
Historically, nations have approached maritime surveillance and border security through a hardware, platform-centric procurement model. With each platform having its bespoke operating systems and command and control (C2), meaning that personnel had to be trained to operate each system or specialise. Often systems were not fully integrated, if integrated at all.

But the modern open architecture approach and the development of AI has paved the way for a border security revolution.

Now, companies like Sirius Insight uses a data-driven, software-led, system approach – from maritime domain awareness to maritime domain understanding and autonomous alerting based on big-data sets. Hardware agnostic, data is extracted from existing infrastructure and additional appropriate sensors. Data fusion and AI analysis

allows nations to adopt emerging technologies quickly, optimising outputs from up-to-date commercial equipment such as satellites, aircraft and UAVs, shore and surface sensors. Using its own web-based portal, INSIGHT™, Sirius is able to deliver the right information, with high-levels of confidence, to decision-makers at the right time.

These technological advancements collectively contribute to more robust and effective maritime border surveillance, addressing the evolving challenges posed by illicit activities at sea.



EU and UNODC Border Security Initiative Mentors Law Enforcement in South-Eastern Europe on Inspection of High-Risk Consignments

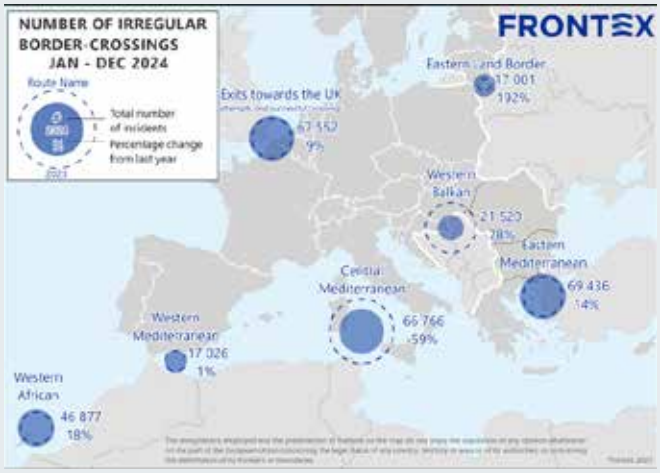
As part of its continuous efforts to enhance border security, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) has recently launched a training and mentoring program for law enforcement officers to apply modern customs control techniques, including practical skills in “profiling” and inspection of high-risk consignments.

UNODC trained 7 customs officers at the Port Control Unit in Vermica, Kosovo*. This training, which was delivered in partnership with the World Customs Organization (WCO), focused on real-time challenges, risk profiling, document verification, and effective use of customs tools to detect illicit activities.

UNODC provided hands-on training for 10 customs and police officers at the Durres seaport, Albania. Under the guidance of WCO and maritime cargo experts, the officers engaged in practical exercises to profile high-risk consignments and conduct container searches.

By enhancing operational capabilities in this manner, the training and mentoring program supports customs, police and other law enforcement in their efforts to combat illicit trade and organized crime. The mentoring approach used ensures that new recruits are equipped with the same level of skills as their experienced colleagues, thus ensuring sustainability of knowledge transfer.

Irregular border crossings into EU drop sharply in 2024



New preliminary data from Frontex reveal a significant 38% drop in irregular border crossings into the EU in 2024, reaching the lowest level since 2021, when migration was still affected by the COVID pandemic. Despite persistent migration pressure, intensified EU and partner cooperation against smuggling networks has significantly reduced crossings at Europe's external borders, with just over 239 000 detections recorded last year.

The decrease in the total number was mainly driven by a 59% plunge in arrivals via the Central Mediterranean route and a 78% fall in detections on the Western Balkan route.

Not all routes saw the same trends, as patterns shifted across the continent. Key developments include:

- Central Mediterranean route: Crossings dropped by 59% due to fewer departures from Tunisia and Libya. Despite the significant decrease, this route still accounted for about 67,000 crossings, the second highest among all routes.
- Western Balkan route: A sharp 78% fall followed strong efforts by regional countries to stem the flow.
- Eastern Mediterranean route: Detections rose by 14% to 69 400, driven by new corridors from eastern Libya, with migrants predominantly from Syria, Afghanistan, and Egypt.
- Western African route: The Canary Islands saw an 18% increase in arrivals to almost 47 000, the highest figure since Frontex began collecting data in 2009. This was fuelled by departures from Mauritania, even as flows from other departure points declined.
- Eastern Borders route: A threefold increase in crossings was reported, mostly along the borders with Ukraine and Belarus.
- English Channel: Detections of attempted crossings to the UK rose slightly, up 9% compared to 2023.

A closer look at demographics shows that the share of women among detected migrants held steady at just over 10%. Markedly, 62% of all women arriving at EU borders entered through the Eastern Mediterranean route, reflecting the dangers and changing dynamics on other paths. Afghan and Syrian women made up the majority of this group.

The share of minors among the irregular migrants increased last year to 16% from 13% in 2023.

Commenting on the preliminary figures, Frontex Executive Director Hans Leijtens said, "Every year, we face unique challenges at our borders that require constant vigilance and adaptability. While 2024 saw a significant reduction in irregular border crossings, it also highlighted emerging risks and shifting dynamics. Frontex and the border authorities across Europe must remain ready and flexible to address these evolving challenges effectively. Our commitment is to protect Europe's borders while upholding the highest standards of humanity and cooperation."

While the 2024 irregular migration figures reflect

progress, challenges remain. Smuggling networks adapt to new circumstances, and migration flows can shift quickly. Authorities reported increasing violence by smugglers along the Western Balkan route, and growing instability in regions like the Sahel continues to drive migration towards Europe.

ROUTE	DECEMBER 2024	JAN-DEC 2024	JAN-DEC 2023/ JAN-DEC 2024	TOP NATIONALITIES (JAN-DEC 2024)
Western African	4 961	46 877	+18%	Mali, Senegal, Morocco
Eastern Mediterranean	4 411	69 436	+14%	Syria, Afghanistan, Egypt
Central Mediterranean	3 074	66 766	-59%	Bangladesh, Syria, Tunisia
Western Mediterranean	1 459	17 026	+1%	Algeria, Morocco, Mali
Western Balkan	813	21 520	-78%	Syria, Türkiye, Afghanistan
Eastern Land Border	385	17 001	+192%	Ukraine, Ethiopia, Somalia
Exits towards the UK	5 376	67 552	+9%	Afghanistan, Syria, Vietnam

The sea crossings, usually orchestrated by organised criminal networks, continue to pose an extreme danger to migrants. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) estimates that 2 300 people lost their lives at sea in 2024 alone, underscoring the tragic human cost of these hazardous routes.

ECOWAS and EU Officially Launch FMM West Africa II to Strengthen Regional Integration and Migration Governance

West Africa is taking a decisive step toward a more integrated future. On February 20, 2025, at the ECOWAS Commission Headquarters in Abuja, Nigeria, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), in collaboration with the European Union (EU), officially launched the second phase of the Support to Free Movement of Persons and Migration in West Africa (FMM West Africa II) Project. This initiative reaffirms the region's commitment to free movement and strengthens migration governance and economic integration across West Africa.

The event was attended by the Vice-President of the ECOWAS Commission, H.E. Damtien L. Tchintchibidja, the Head of Cooperation at the EU Delegation to Nigeria and ECOWAS, Mr. Massimo De Luca, and the Director of Free Movement of Persons and Migration at the ECOWAS Commission, Mr. Albert Siaw-Boateng, representing the Commissioner for Economic Affairs and Agriculture, Mrs Massandje Toure-Litse. Also present were senior ECOWAS officials such as the Chairperson and members of the Permanent Representatives Committee (PRC), representatives from EU Member States, development partners, and key stakeholders in

migration and regional integration. Their participation underscored the collective commitment to ensuring that migration becomes a driver of economic growth, security, and social cohesion in West Africa.

Delivering the opening remarks, the Vice-President of the ECOWAS Commission, H.E. Damtien L. Tchintchibidja, reaffirmed ECOWAS' dedication to regional mobility and economic cooperation, stating, "Migration has always been a fundamental part of West Africa's history and development. FMM II will reinforce the frameworks that enable people to move safely and contribute to economic prosperity. Today, we take a decisive step toward making migration a source of opportunity, not a challenge."

Speaking on behalf of the European Union, the Head of Cooperation at the EU Delegation to Nigeria and ECOWAS, Mr. Massimo De Luca, emphasised the EU's continued support for migration governance in the region, noting, "The European Union remains steadfast in its commitment to supporting ECOWAS in building a robust migration system. Through FMM II, we are strengthening institutional frameworks to ensure migration is safe, structured, and beneficial for all."

In her welcome remarks, read on her behalf by the Director of Free Movement of Persons and Migration at the ECOWAS Commission, the Commissioner for Economic Affairs and Agriculture, Mrs. Massandje Touré-Litse, provided insight into the operational objectives of the project. She outlined FMM II's role in improving migration frameworks, stating, "This second phase will enhance legal frameworks, improve border management, and support Member States in implementing policies that facilitate free movement while ensuring security and social stability."

Funded by the European Union, FMM II will be implemented by a consortium of key migration agencies, including the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the International Labour Organization (ILO), and the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD). Over the next phase, the initiative will work closely with ECOWAS Member States to align national policies with regional frameworks, enhance institutional capacity, and foster safe, wellgoverned migration across West Africa.

The launch of FMM II marks a significant milestone in regional cooperation, reinforcing ECOWAS' vision for a borderless, economically integrated, and socially cohesive West Africa. As migration continues to shape global economies and security policies, ECOWAS and the EU are demonstrating that mobility, when well-managed, is not a crisis — it is the future.

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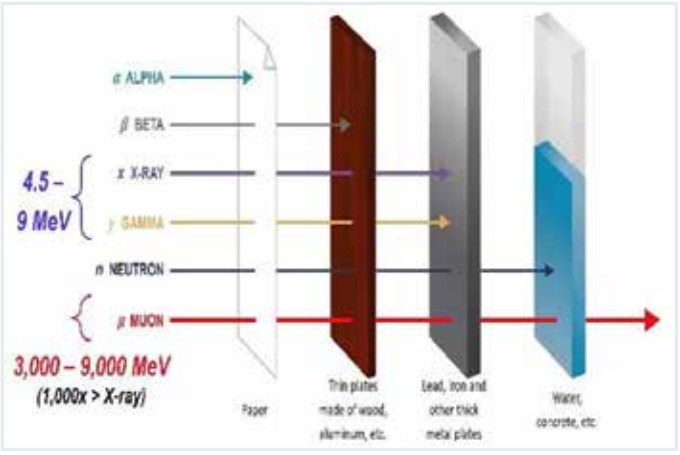
SCALING UP AND ACCELERATING DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION USING INHERENTLY SAFE MUON TOMOGRAPHY FOR NII TO AID CUSTOMS AND BUILD A DATA RICH CAPABILITY AND ECOSYSTEM

By Kevin Davies - Decision Sciences International Corporation (DSIC)

Where are we today?

In today's modern world and the Global Supply chain on which we rely so heavily, we are living in an age of increasing and emerging threats –including radioactive materials being used as a weapon (dirty bomb or WMD) due to the increasingly porous borders and lack of controls around areas such as western Ukraine; and of course the ever present threats of explosives and biological pathogens and illicit narcotics being traded illegally and landing on our streets. With these things in mind and in the face of escalating cross-border smuggling, authorities need to rigorously



monitor imports, exports, transit traffic and people for illicit goods and dangerous materials. They increasingly require more powerful and diverse toolsets exceeding the capabilities of conventional high energy X-Ray Non-Intrusive Inspection (NII) systems, to complement and facilitate a higher degree of assured detection for the items/cargo under inspection. In a strategically deployed layered security approach Muon Tomography can offer unique capabilities in this area, allowing truly safe NII, data driven, with unparalleled penetration. Its unique attributes to detect Shielded Nuclear Materials (SNM), added to the ability to effectively screen the densest of material and cargo, this can easily be seen in the comparative illustration later in the article.

Recap on the technology – Muon Tomography (Muography)

A naturally occurring harmless flux of muons are constantly raining down onto earth from the atmosphere 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Known as “Primary Cosmic Rays” they shatter in the Earth’s atmosphere to produce a continuous flux of muons and electrons.

Primary cosmic rays are subatomic particles, composed mostly of protons (>90%) + and helium nuclei, accelerated to large energies by astrophysical objects. Cosmic rays “shatter” in the Earth’s atmosphere through collision events with atomic nuclei and produce a continuous flux of elementary charged particles known as muons and electrons. This harmless flux of muons is constantly raining down onto earth from the atmosphere 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, everywhere around the globe. On average at sea level over 10000 muons and 2000 electrons pass through your body every minute.

Muon Tomography harnesses the characteristics of these “Charged Particles” to produce 3-Dimensional imagery with material classification capabilities in a safe manner WITHOUT the need for radiation protection, as it uses a naturally occurring phenomena. One characteristic that facilitates the “data lake” able to be tapped into is the highly penetrative characteristic as shown in the illustration comparatively to the likes of High Energy X-Ray.

The science and the “magic” in this inspection technology is largely due to the unique AI / ML and algorithms that have been developed by the Physicists / Data Scientists and Engineers working in this field, and it is these we will explore in a little more detail within the article.

Advanced Technology Adoption for NII

The increasing adoption of software-based algorithms Machine Learning (ML) and Artificial Intelligence (AI) being injected into the “process flow” of inspections and particularly NII at a Port or a Border crossing, is

leading to increasingly automated screening solutions. These solutions and systems not only advance the screening procedures and detection capabilities, allowing authorities to monitor for and identify complex threats, but reduce the operator burden, create higher throughput, and maintain system uptime to help keep both people and property safe, without the need for large numbers of highly skilled and very costly security personnel.

AI and ML facilitate our increasing ability to respond quickly to ever changing threats; they leverage new and developing technologies that produce detailed management information from an increasingly complex screening operation that in turn can provide infinitely more data. It is already commonplace to integrate certain technologies, camera-based and sensor-based, from different suppliers and vendors. Taking this further to incorporate Muon Tomography with its data rich outputs feeding ML algorithms is a natural progression to enhance the data models and software algorithms needed. We argue that it is a more flexible approach by authorities to include a SAFE and capable technology, such as Muon Tomography, that accelerate innovation with positive results. Giving much needed diverse screening options to Customs Authorities moving away from High-Energy X-Ray system technology and its limited data availability and inherent health and safety considerations.

What can we expect to see from Ports and Borders operation of NII in the future?

A Wider adoption of emerging technologies such as Muon Tomography imaging systems, these can offer unique capabilities complimenting existing and developing systems. Access to additional data allows concepts such as federated learning models, that protect data privacy, integrity and cyber security requirements, whilst providing that “stream of commerce” data needed by developers to ensure “fit for purpose” training datasets that increase an automated probability of detection for operators, with minimal false alarm rates. All of which advance the detection capabilities through ever more accurate and effective algorithms.

Interoperability between competing vendors and their systems across sites and country borders , increased collaboration between those established and new players on centralized platforms with greater adoption of OA and remote screening facilities. Conformance and adoption of Cyber security standards with adoption of federated techniques to give vendors unfettered access to the essential training datasets which ultimately will translate to higher probability of detection with less false positives. A standardization and inclusion of generic API’s for multiple asset access across multiple platforms with true data integration and facilitating interoperability across all systems.

With Software Architectures moving away from monolithic to containerized structures multiple solutions / approaches can be offered. These services can take advantage of AI / ML services and solutions using SaaS, PaaS models and can be provided On Premise, in the Cloud or a mixture of both, as you need it using and taking advantage of the latest in Edge Computing capabilities while truly maintaining Cyber Security.

AI / ML applied to Muography Imagery

Advanced detection capabilities enabled by AI and embedded in NII systems can and will further enhance existing security systems, particularly in a Ports and Borders environment AI) powered software algorithms using Deep Learning (DL) are at the heart of a Muography Imaging system. As trading volumes increase but the necessary resource availability for inspection is decrease, AI tools fill the void and increasing the probability of detection, ensuring anomalies are highlighted using tools such as VOI (Volume of Interest), a marking tool in a 3D environment like ROI (Region of Interest) commonly used in existing X-Ray inspection systems.

The Approach, how and what ML / DL techniques are used

In one approach, DL refers to the use of Convolutional Neural Networks (CNN) to generate predictions either per voxel or per scan, depending on the algorithm. To refresh understandings, CNNs are a class of artificial neural networks that currently achieve state-of-the-art results in some computer vision tasks, and are increasingly being used/relied on for NII system imagery, but not exclusively, as they are also in use in areas such as medical image classification and segmentation which has similar challenges. The Muon Tomography imagery are 3-channel images, with channels (importantly) that utilize both Muon and Electron information in separate reconstructions, which are then concatenated. There are only a few commercial companies with applications and have successfully applied modern computer vision technology and deep learning to Muon-based reconstructions and incorporate these models into a product, and only one that has done this in a commercially available product! Generally, they will use multi-scale CNNs and supervised DL modelling approaches for the models developed so far. The models are trained on proprietary datasets, collected, labelled, and curated by the developer in a federated manner to ensure data integrity and facilitate

cyber security requirements. This library includes models based on semantic segmentation, object detection, and image regression.

Image Segmentation

The cargo segmentation model assigns a cargo class label to each voxel in the reconstruction. It utilizes a four-layer UNET architecture with skip connections trained on patches of the reconstruction. The UNET architecture is an encoder-decoder often used for semantic segmentation. Additionally, the last layer is a SoftMax function with 4 classes. The loss function is used because it gives control over the false positives / false negatives for each class. The model achieves very good performance in a production environment and is easy to apply and maintain.

Image Acceleration

The image acceleration model has the same architecture as the Image segmentation model (UNET CNN with 4 layers and skip connections), but instead of a SoftMax last layer, there is a regression layer with a loss function. The model is also trained on patches of the reconstruction and uses a selected time restricted reconstruction as output. The purpose of the image enhancement model is to accelerate the generation of a longer time reconstruction, thus greatly reducing the time the cargo needs to spend in the detector. Muon Tomography in current systems relies on passive naturally occurring Muon / Electrons for reconstruction generation, and thus, the time required for a quality reconstruction is measured

in minutes (≈ 3min). The model developed for image acceleration achieves very good performance in production.

Anomaly Detection / Region of Interest

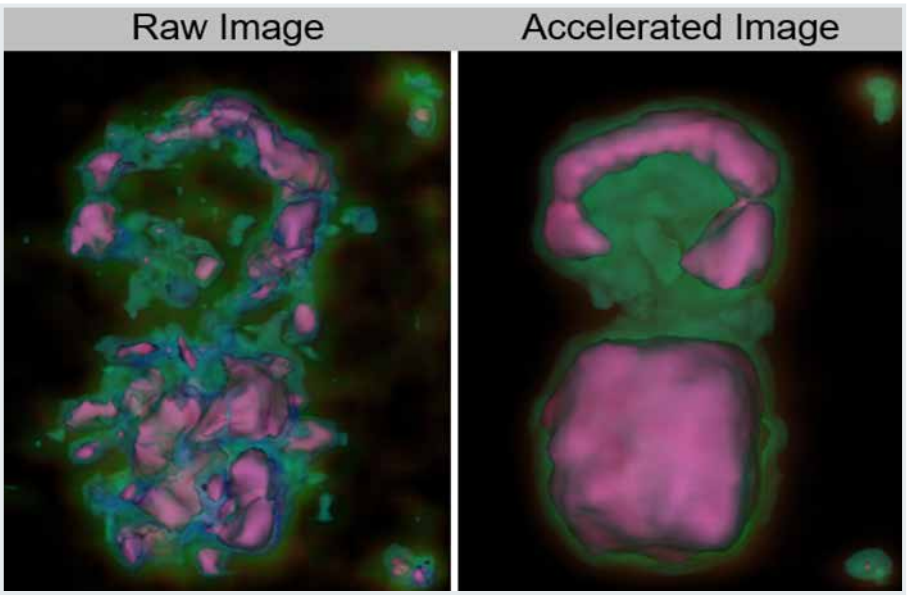
The Region of Interest (RoI) problem is posed as an object detection problem. In contrast to semantic segmentation, which outputs predictions per voxel and the localization and categorization of objects needs several analytical steps, you can use a state-of-the-art single-stage detector. The architecture generally used is Retina U-net, which fuses the RetinaNet one-stage detector with UNET architecture, thus allowing full leverage of the full "per voxel" supervision signal. This is especially beneficial in smaller datasets. RetinaNet UNET provides strong detection performance, generally only achieved by two-stage detectors.

Costs

The initial acquisition cost of a Muon Tomography system for Customs NII purposes will be approximately twice the cost of a standard High Energy X-Ray system. I would suggest, however, that the important cost that should be considered is the Total Cost of Ownership (TCO) over the equipment lifetime. The Muography system has no moving parts with no radiation protection walls/building needed; its annual maintenance cost is minimal, with experience shown to be, on average, only about 30% that of a typical HE X-ray system. This significantly reduced annual cost easily translates to a considerable savings to the Customs administration. Mapping and considering the running and acquisition costs together, the conventional X-ray system and Muography system reach a comparable level of cost in year 5 of an average 15 year expected lifespan, with the Muography system thereafter costing significantly less in real terms year on year with all the advantages that come with it: No harmful radiation, 3D imagery and unrivalled penetration leading to an assured probability of detection.

Real world examples of the impact of AI / ML on Muon Tomography images

These exciting applications of Machine Learning in the field of Muon Tomography are not merely a futuristic possibility but are very real and available today. One simple example of Image Segmentation applied to Muon Tomography data is shown here, where the models have been trained to identify voxels filled with material vs those filled only with air, allowing the system to clean up signal smear and produce a much clearer image. The images show a side view of the rear portion of a cargo container and trailer. The 2 trailer wheels and axles are visible at the bottom of the images, directly above them is a pallet of gravel, and forward is a 3-ton block of granite. In the Raw Image, cloudiness is visible throughout the image surrounding the materials, an artifact of the reconstruction algorithms used to produce the image. In the segmented image the materials have been separated from the surrounding air and the signal smear is removed, producing a



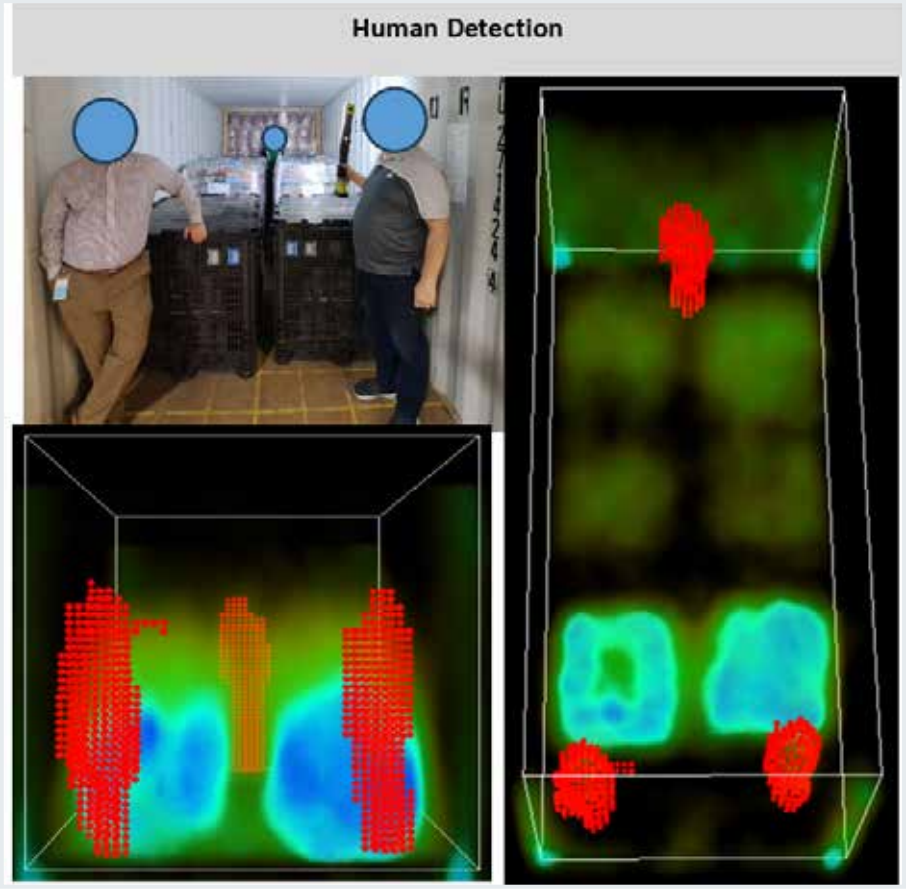
much sharper image for an operator to inspect.

A second application of ML in Muon Tomography is Image Acceleration, analogous to photographic age progression for scan images. In the first example of Accelerated Imaging, two pallets of gravel can be seen from a top view perspective. The lower pallet consists entirely of gravel, while the upper pallet contains a fentanyl surrogate embedded inside. The Raw Image displayed uses 60 seconds of Muon data, showing significant variation in signal resulting in a “noisy” appearance. With the application of Accelerated Imaging models, the signal variation is greatly reduced, providing the operator with an image of much higher quality and clarity.

A real-world example of Accelerated Imaging comes in the context of a seizure by U.S. Customs and Border Protection of more than 2 tons of marijuana at the Mariposa Port of Entry along the U.S. Mexico border (link to new article). The method of smuggling in this instance was to conceal drugs inside metal containers, weld them shut, then conceal these containers inside large rolls of sheet metal. This elaborate process produces large interior volumes for concealing contraband shrouded in metal, presenting a significant challenge in terms of penetration for x-ray systems to detect. As shown in the images to the right.

To the left is a Muon Tomography image of one of the steel rolls using 60 seconds of Muon data. Again, a “noisy” appearance is seen in the raw image, and the much cleaner Accelerated Image. The internal structure of the steel rolls is clearly visible to an operator as it is below on an image of the complete truck

Region of Interest / Volume of Interest is a broad application for AI and ML, as there are many reasons to consider a region “interesting.” A volume with an identifiable object within it, or other notable substructure indicative of an anomaly is one way a volume may be of interest. Another way a volume may be interesting is by being different than the others as might be the case of an anomalous pallet of contraband material being shipped alongside a container loaded with a particular commodity. If/when manifest data becomes available, this application will extend into manifest verification for commercial shipping. One exciting example application of Volumes of Interest is that of Human Detection. Humans produce a recognizable signature in the cosmic ray muon and electron data, and AI models can detect their presence within a cargo consignment. Left is shown an example of this capability. Three gentlemen are standing in various positions in a cargo container with pallets of material throughout. Along



with the reconstructed image of the entire scene, the 3 figures are clearly shown in red, the voxel-by-voxel output of a Human Detection ML model.

Conclusions and Possible Impact

Muon tomography is an innovative technique that offers distinct advantages over traditional X-ray inspection methods. Muons are minimally interactive with matter, resulting in a SAFE technology for use as a NII toolset Additionally, the technology employed in muon tomography only relies on naturally occurring radiation and can gather data over extended periods, allowing for continuous monitoring and more comprehensive assessments with a larger dataset. The advancements in AI and ML are not just theoretical; they have been successfully demonstrated to have real-world applications in enhancing the capabilities of Muon Tomography imagery for NII. By utilizing the continued use of DL models and advanced image processing techniques, these passive and SAFE systems can quickly and accurately identify anomalies in cargo, reducing false alarms and increasing the probability of detecting. As this technology continues to evolve, and with partnership access to elements of meta data from the authorities, it promises to play a critical role in safeguarding global trade and ensuring the safety of people and goods. Muon tomography is a powerful and data rich alternative for inspection, offering deeper penetration, 3-dimensional imagery, continuous monitoring capabilities, and potential significant cost advantages, particularly when it comes to the infrastructure required for high-energy X-ray machines, making it ideal for Customs use in NII applications in an environment where traditional X-ray methods may fall short.

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AGENCY NEWS AND UPDATES

BOC-NAIA Seizes Undeclared Foreign Currency at NAIA

The Bureau of Customs-Ninoy Aquino International Airport (BOC-NAIA) intercepted undeclared foreign currencies from a departing passenger at NAIA Terminal 1.

The seized currency consisted of 3,950,000 Japanese Yen (JPY), 20,000 Euro (EUR), and 8,500 Kuwaiti Dinar (KWD).

Customs personnel flagged suspicious items during the routine x-ray screening of a hand-carried baggage belonging to a Filipino national departing for Hong Kong. A physical examination of the luggage revealed bundles of foreign currencies concealed inside which the passenger failed to declare.

$39.5 million in counterfeit sports merchandise seized ahead of Super Bowl LIX

In a joint press conference with the National Football League (NFL), the National Intellectual Property Rights Coordination Center (IPR Center), led by Director Ivan J. Arvelo, announced the seizure of $39.5 million in counterfeit sports merchandise through Operation Team Player. This year-long, collaborative initiative between Homeland Security Investigations (HSI), U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP), and major sports leagues aims to prevent counterfeit sports-related merchandise and apparel from reaching fans ahead of high-profile sporting events.

In total, more than 214,507 counterfeit items were seized, including jerseys, t-shirts, hats, jewelry, and various other memorabilia. Since its launch in 2013, Operation Team Player has seized more than $455 million in counterfeit sports merchandise and apparel, making it the largest anti-counterfeiting initiative within the federal government.

Spanish Authorities Seize Over Half a Tonne of Cocaine in the Atlantic

The Spanish Navy, in coordination with the Spanish National Police, has successfully intercepted a sailing vessel carrying over 600 kilograms of cocaine. The operation, a collaboration between the French (DNRED), UK (NCA), and US (DEA) authorities, targeted maritime drug trafficking.

The vessel, flying a Polish flag, was en route to the Canary Islands when it was located 800 nautical miles west of Tenerife.

Following a coordinated operation supported by MAOC-N and led by Spain's Centre for Intelligence against Terrorism and Organised Crime (CITCO), the vessel was boarded by the Spanish GEO (Special Operations Group) agents. They arrested the two crew members and seized 19 bales of cocaine, along with documentation and electronic devices.

More Than 13,000 Cartons of Duty-Unpaid Cigarettes Detected at Tuas Checkpoint

A 26-year-old Malaysian man attempted to smuggle more than 13,000 cartons of duty-unpaid cigarettes into Singapore via a Malaysia-registered lorry at Tuas Checkpoint.

During arrival clearance, an Immigration & Checkpoints Authority (ICA) Image Analyst detected anomalies in the scanned images of the lorry's consignment, which was declared to contain "Glass Jars". The lorry was referred for enhanced checks where ICA officers uncovered 13,035 cartons and 9,768 packets of duty-unpaid cigarettes concealed inside cardboard boxes containing glass jars.

Six accused of migrant smuggling in large groups in Latvia

Five Ukrainian citizens and one Belarusian citizen, motivated by greed, agreed in an organized group set up by a person against whom criminal proceedings have been opened in a separate case-file to illegally transport migrants from the external border of the European Union to the vicinity of the city of Rīga.

In two cases, a vehicle with an imitated State Police identity paint and a duplicated vehicle number plate was used to illegally transport migrants, and in one case, a vehicle with an imitated State Border Guard identity paint and a duplicated vehicle number plate was used.

In total, the accused illegally transported 81 immigrants without valid visas and residence permits, who had previously illegally crossed the Belarusian-Latvian border, in three transport operations.

Thailand mulls wall on Cambodia border as scam centre crackdown widens

Thailand will study the feasibility of building a wall along part of its border with Cambodia to prevent illegal crossings, a government spokesman said.

The wall would be part of a multi-national effort to dismantle the sprawling network of call-scam centres based just outside Thailand's borders and whose global victims include large numbers of Thais.

The crackdown on these criminal organisations involved in massive financial fraud, mostly operated by Chinese gangsters based in Cambodia and Myanmar, is being expanded.

Hundreds of thousands of people believing they were going to legitimate jobs have been trafficked by these criminal gangs in recent years and held in virtual slavery, according to the United Nations.

Operation Venetic: Man who killed off-duty police officer laundered millions for organised crime group

A man who killed an off-duty police officer a decade ago has admitted being part of an organised crime group (OCG) and laundering up to £13m, following a National Crime Agency investigation.

He played a key role in the supply of Class A drugs and co-ordinated the collection, storage and laundering of the OCG's money – between £10m and £13m – in cash through third party business accounts.

NCA officers discovered EncroChat conversations and images revealing that Donovan had also played a significant role in the supply of class A drugs to the UK. In discussions with other organised criminals, he asked for "any news on far ones" (container ships transporting cocaine), and haggled

over the price of “botts” and “tops” – references to kilogram quantities of heroin and cocaine.

SAPS Five-day session underway to develop plan to tackle transnational organised crime

South African Police Service (SAPS) organised a five-day strategic session to develop a comprehensive plan to prevent and combat transnational organised crime is underway in Pretoria.

This session has brought together key stakeholders in the fight against crime as well as various security experts with the aim of ensuring that organised criminal networks involved in drug trafficking, the proliferation of firearms, the influx of illegal immigrants, cybercrime and theft of vehicles amongst other transnational organised crimes are dismantled.

The meeting aimed to enhance regional cooperation and develop effective measures to combat transnational organised crime in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region.

Suspected €7.9m drugs haul seized in cross-border crackdown

A suspected €7.9 million (£6.5 million) drugs haul has been seized following a cross-border operation.

Cannabis, cocaine and ketamine are believed to have been discovered

concealed within food packaging following the search of premises in the Mallusk area of Newtownabbey, Co Antrim.

It came as detectives from the Police Service of Northern Ireland and An Garda Síochána worked together as part of the Joint Agency Task Force.

Illicit trade is bringing new security risks to the Balkans

Counterfeit and contraband tobacco products represent a bigger health hazard than regulated tobacco, while porous borders are a security risk for NATO’s eastern and south eastern flanks.

A unnamed smuggler operating at the Romanian Ukrainian border spoke to a local media outlet some years ago confessing something everyone already knew, namely that poverty speaks for itself.

“As long as people remain poor, demand for smuggled cigarettes will never go away. And neither will we,” he said.

From Greece to Romania trading in illicit goods has repeatedly proven to constitute a social, economic and security risk for the entire region.

The Western Balkans has long been part of a route through which smuggled goods especially cigarettes make their way to Western Europe. Recent data has revealed that about 11 per cent of smokers in the Balkan region buy tobacco products on the grey market.

Detection and seizure of large quantities of drugs on the islands of Rhodes and Megisti

During a patrol carried out, two sacks were found and collected at distance of about 100 metres between them, by the Officers of the regional drug prosecution team of the security office of the Central Port Authority of Rhodes. The two sacks were found and collected in the coastal area of “ Kato Petries” of the island of Rhodes, a total of 90 plastic packages with pills type ‘’CAPTAGON”, possibly drugs. Some of them have been damaged due the influx of seawater. Their total quantity is estimated at 181.000 pieces.

The same day at noon, the Central Port Authority of Rhodes was informed

by the Port Station of Megisti that 40 packages of pills, possibly drugs ,were also found with an estimated total quantity of 80.000 pieces. No further drugs have been found by the Port Authorities.

It is noted that the above packages bore an external logo with ''swastika'' symbol.

Preliminary investigation is carried out by the Central Port Authority of Rhodes.

Home Affairs nets 'phantom' businesses in suspected Tasmanian visa fraud

Australian Border Force (ABF) officers from the Department of Home Affairs exposed multiple cases of suspected exploitation of Australia's visa and migration system during targeted inspections recently across Hobart and Devonport.

ABF officers profiled numerous Tasmanian companies, uncovering intelligence on 'phantom' nominations and fraudulent permanent residency applications under the Employer Nomination Scheme.

This intelligence led to targeted early morning searches over several days, allowing officers to conduct staff interviews, verify bona fides and gather critical evidence.

The operation exposed five non-existent nominated businesses, fraudulent application documents – including falsified lease agreements – and the misuse of two legitimate business credentials for bogus visa applications.

Singapore man charged after 40kg in illicit drugs allegedly found in abandoned luggage at Sydney Airport

A Singaporean national has been charged with allegedly importing 32kg of methamphetamine and 8kg of cocaine into Australia on an international flight, hidden inside his luggage.

Australian Border Force (ABF) officers stopped the man when he arrived in Sydney on a flight from Malaysia. The man allegedly claimed he was not travelling with any checked luggage and was initially cleared to depart Sydney Airport.

ABF officers subsequently found two suitcases abandoned on a luggage carousel, which allegedly had identification tags on them in the man's name. The suitcases contained about 32kg of methamphetamine and 8kg of cocaine. The ABF referred the matter to the AFP, who seized the luggage and began the search for the passenger.

Further investigations revealed he had travelled from Sydney to Adelaide. AFP officers arrested him at Adelaide Airport where he was attempting to board a flight to Malaysia.

Drugs Including More Than 5.6kg of Heroin Detected at Woodlands Checkpoint

A 58-year-old Singaporean man was arrested for attempting to smuggle a large amount of heroin in a Singapore-registered car arriving at Woodlands Checkpoint.

ICA officers directed the car for enhanced checks where they uncovered 10 black bundles concealed under the driver's seat, and five black bundles concealed beneath the front passenger seat. As the bundles were suspected to contain controlled drugs, the man was immediately placed under arrest and the case was handed over to the Central Narcotics Bureau (CNB) for further investigation.

The bundles were later found to contain drugs amounting to about 5,653g of heroin, 14g of 'Ice', 11g of 'Ecstasy' and 2,000 Erimin-5 tablets, estimated to be worth more than SGD628,000 and could potentially feed the addiction of about 2,700 abusers for a week. Cash of SGD48.60 and MYR1,640.90 were also seized.

HEARTBEAT DETECTOR | GEOVOX SECURITY

Heartbeat Detector was developed by United States Department of Energy and Oak Ridge National Lab to provide quick, accurate, easy and portable human traffic detection in vehicles of any size, including fully loaded tractor-trailers.

FOR OVER 25 YEARS, THE HEARTBEAT DETECTOR IS THE GOLD STANDARD

PRISONS - BORDERS - MILITARY - NUCLEAR

The US Department of Energy and Oak Ridge National Lab developed the Heartbeat Detector to detect people hiding in vehicles of all varieties by detecting the movements of a beating heart. **In use for 25 years, it is proven 99%+ effective** by Oak Ridge, Sandia, and Thunder Mountain Nat. Labs—and operates daily for the British, French, Spanish, Chinese and others. The US Army, US Air Force and US Bureau of Prisons have been using it for 15+ years. The Heartbeat Detector has negligible maintenance, takes 10 minutes to train, returns a decision in 10 seconds and has a life of 15 years.

FLEURY MEROGIS PENITENTIARY / PARIS, FRANCE

HOW IT WORKS

The Heartbeat Detector operates on a military-spec computer connected to four sensors. Once the vehicle is turned off and the driver exits, each sensor is placed on a flat surface of the tested vehicle. The four sensors "listen" for 10 seconds and can "feel" the vibration of a human heartbeat inside the vehicle. Then it provides a simple green "PASS" or a red "SEARCH" result. **The entire search process takes 30 seconds**. The Heartbeat Detector is a "non-intrusive inspection".

ALTERNATIVES

Current methods used to detect people in vehicles include dogs and x-ray (or similar) systems. Dogs are temperamental, imprecise, expensive and work only a few hours a day. X-ray or similar systems much are slower, significantly more expensive, require highly-trained personnel and radiate vehicle occupants. The Heartbeat Detector allows operators to quickly, inexpensively and accurately search high volumes of tractor-trailers and catch human trafficking and smuggling operations, preventing fatalities from heat exhaustion and dehydration, while keeping occupants safe from x-ray radiation.

CLIENTS:

- US Army Disciplinary Barracks, 1999
- Cheyenne Mountain NORAD, 2008
- Fleury Merogis Penitentiary, 2013
- EDF Nuclear Facilities, 2009
- US Air Force Ramstein, 2018
- US Air Force Aviano, 2018
- Ukraine Prison Service, 2014
- Lithuania Border Police, 2012
- Slovenia Border Police, 1994
- Port of Tanger, 2010
- Texas Department of Corrections, 2004
- New York Department of Corrections, 2014
- Tennessee Department of Corrections, 1998
- Kansas Department of Corrections, 2005
- Missouri Department of Corrections, 2006
- Florida Department of Corrections, 2002
- Indiana Department of Corrections, 1999
- German Prison Service, 2012
- Czech Prison Service, 2001
- Hong Kong Prison Service, 2009
- USA Federal Bureau of Prisons, 1999
- Spanish National Police, 2001
- Guardia Civil Spain, 2000
- French Ministry of Justice, 2013
- Hellenic Police, 2016
- Washington State Department of Corrections, 2002

HEARTBEAT DETECTOR

GEOVOX SECURITY

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Japan Deepens its Support to Emergency Health and Border Management in Sudan

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) has received a crucial contribution of USD 1.5 million from the Government of Japan to implement an urgently needed response to Sudan's rapidly worsening health situation and support humanitarian border management.

Sudan is currently facing the world's largest displacement crisis, with the humanitarian situation deteriorating to catastrophic levels. Overcrowded and unsanitary gathering areas for displaced people have become breeding grounds for deadly disease outbreaks, including cholera, malaria, dengue, and measles.

A cholera outbreak was declared in August 2024, and by early January 2025, over 51,300 cases had been confirmed across 11 states, resulting in more than 1,350 associated deaths. Kassala and Gedaref states are experiencing the highest burden of this outbreak.

"In these difficult and challenging times, when the people of Sudan are confronting unprecedented hardship, the Government of Japan continues its support, enabling us to deliver essential humanitarian assistance where it is most desperately needed," said Mohamed Refaat, IOM Sudan Chief of Mission.

The healthcare infrastructure is in dire straits, with 70 – 80 percent of health facilities in conflict-affected areas either non-functional or overwhelmed. An estimated 65 percent of the population lacks access to adequate healthcare.

With this support, IOM will enhance life-saving healthcare services, accelerate responses to disease outbreaks, and strengthen humanitarian border management to ensure safe and dignified crossings for people on the move. The initiative will focus on the most vulnerable populations, particularly those displaced by conflict in Gedaref, Northern, and West Darfur states.

Kentaro Mizuuchi, Chargé d'Affaires of Japan to Sudan stated: "Japan has long been committed to supporting initiatives that address Sudan's critical healthcare crisis. In line with the IOM's efforts to deliver life-saving healthcare services, this project aims to meet the urgent needs of Sudanese communities, especially in light of widespread displacement and the growing risk of infectious disease outbreaks. The country's inadequate healthcare infrastructure has worsened the suffering of many, making it crucial for Japan to step forward and help alleviate the hardships faced by the Sudanese people."

The project will optimize resource utilization, empower local actors, and promote sustainable solutions. IOM will collaborate closely with the Federal and State Ministries of Health, Immigration Authorities, humanitarian stakeholders active in the country, and the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) for the implementation of the project.

EU, ICCWC, and civil society join forces to combat wildlife crime

The European Union (EU) awarded the International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime (ICCWC) €27 million to tackle organized crime networks trafficking in wildlife globally and reduce the demand driving this illicit trade, in collaboration with civil society organizations.

The new initiative, GUARD Wildlife - Global United Action to Reduce and Dismantle Organized Wildlife Crime – aims to conserve endangered species and biodiversity for future generations. The project will be implemented through a close partnership between ICCWC members – the Secretariat of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL), the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the World Customs Organization (WCO) - and civil society organizations. GUARD Wildlife will harness the expertise of EU Member States and engage closely with national authorities and law enforcement agencies to strengthen the global fight against organized wildlife crime.

Year after year, the international community has placed growing importance on combating illegal trade to conserve wildlife, making the disruption of trafficking networks a top priority. The latest UNODC World Wildlife Crime Report (2024) documented illegal trade seizures in 162 countries and territories during 2015–2021, affecting around 4,000 plant and animal species.

GUARD Wildlife will enhance coordinated responses to combat wildlife crime at the national, regional and international levels and reduce illicit trafficking in wildlife and wildlife products in source, transit and destination countries. The initiative will unite key players to improve collaboration and strengthen information sharing. Efforts will also focus on bolstering national enforcement systems, including customs, police and border control, by providing expert mentorship and targeted support. Additionally, innovative demand-reduction efforts grounded in behavioural science will be implemented in consumer markets.

WorldBorderSecurity.net

World Border Security Network (**WorldBorderSecurity.net**), a global network for agency officials at the borders.

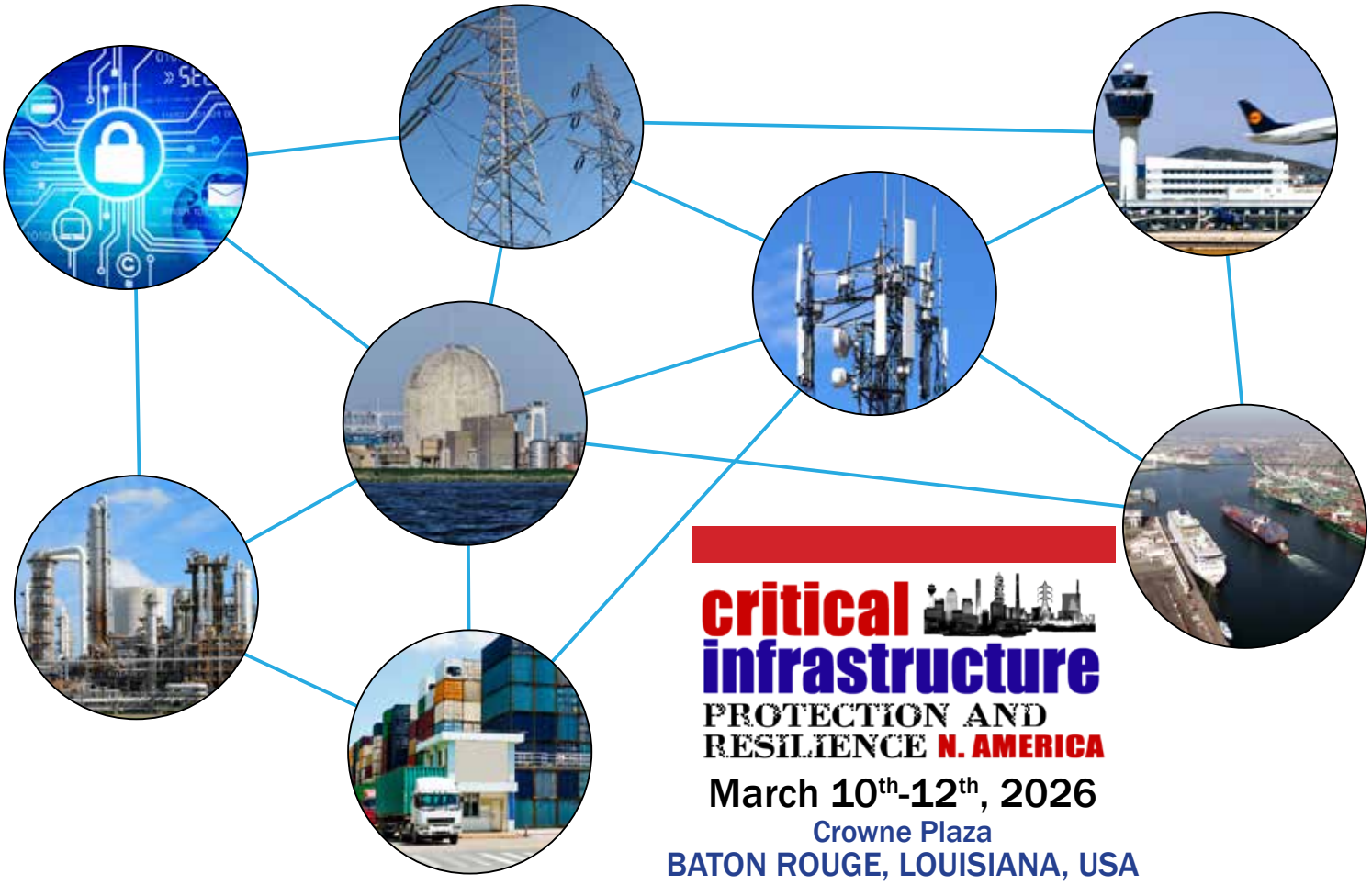
The purpose of the network is to encourage and facilitate inter-agency co-operation and communication.
Members of the network will be able to:

- communicate securely
- share information
- share documents
- share best practise
- view past presentations
- keep up-to-date with the latest technology developments
- share training opportunities
- and more...

WorldBorderSecurity.net is open to all World Border Security Congress government agency delegates past and present.

Access is restricted to government and intergovernmental personnel; border, customs, immigration agency officials and specialist law enforcement officers.

Non-delegate agency officials will also be welcome but by member invitation only.



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Crackdown on illegal wildlife products at the border

Operation Thunder is an intensive international operation to target the criminal networks behind wildlife crime,

Border Force officers taking part in Operation Thunder 24 made 217 seizures of wildlife products which are controlled by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of wild fauna and flora (CITES).

Seizures included live plants, a range of beauty products containing caviar and cactus extracts, a quantity of bear bile, and clothes and accessories containing animal skins.

Live plants

Border Force officers also detected over 400 live birds as part of the operation, including rosella parakeets, king parrots, African grey parrots and blue-fronted Amazon parrots. Where possible, Border Force will rehome any live animals found.

Operation Thunder is a global effort to target the illegal wildlife trade and is co-led by Interpol and the World Customs Organisation (WCO).

Wildlife crime is estimated to be worth up to £17 billion globally per year and is the fourth largest international crime according to Interpol, behind only arms, drugs and human trafficking. Strengthening border security and breaking the criminal networks that seek to abuse our borders is a key part of the government's plan for change.

Border Force Director for National Operations, Danny Hewitt said, "Wildlife crime is a serious organised crime which fuels corruption, threatens species with extinction, deprives some of the world's poorest communities of sustainable livelihoods, and degrades ecosystems."

"We take an intelligence-led approach to detecting illegal trade and work closely with our partners across the global community to share training, expertise and skills."

Border Force works closely with other enforcement agencies, both nationally and internationally, to tackle the illegal wildlife trade and keep borders secure. This includes the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA), London Heathrow Animal Reception Centre and Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, amongst others.

This year's Operation Thunder was also supported by the police, who executed 5 warrants in relation to bird egg smuggling. This has so far resulted in the confiscation of over 5,000 bird eggs.

Operation Thunder 24 led to seizures in the UK which included:
- over 400 live birds (51 CITES listed)
- 7kg of ivory
- 450 live plants
- 315kg of beauty products containing caviar
- over 2,500 pills and 21.5kg of powders containing endangered plant and animal species
- live corals
- snow leopard garments

Border Force is responsible for frontline detection and seizure of items covered by the CITES convention, which tackles the illegal trade in endangered animals and plants. The Heathrow-based Border Force CITES team are specialist officers who are recognised as world leaders in their field.

United Nations Network on Migration Launches the Thailand Migration Report 2024

Migration remains a cornerstone of Thailand's socio-economic development, offering immense opportunities and potential when well-managed and when the rights of migrants are protected, according to the latest Thailand Migration Report launched today by the United Nations Network on Migration in Thailand.

Now in its sixth edition, the report, (the previous edition was published in 2019) is a joint UN inter-agency publication produced by members of the UN Network on Migration in Thailand.The report provides a comprehensive analysis of the multifaceted nature of migration, policies and the lived realities of migrants in Thailand.

As a hub for intraregional migration and main destination country in Southeast Asia, Thailand hosts at least 5.3 million non-Thai nationals, marking an 8 per cent increase compared to nearly 4.9 million non-Thai population as indicated in the last report. Thailand is also a transit country for migrant workers, refugees and asylum seekers, and trafficked persons as well as an origin country deploying Thai workers across the region and beyond.

The report delves into the state of migration through 11 chapters that revolve around four central themes of leaving no one behind, working conditions of migrants, human rights and access to justice, and expanding social protection and health care. Each chapter, written collaboratively by nine UN agencies, includes updates on migration-related policies and legislative frameworks, details the current situation for migrants, and makes recommendations for evidence-based policy and programmatic changes that promote inclusivity and protection for all migrants.

"This report offers a comprehensive stock take of the opportunities that migrants bring and the challenges they face. It allows us to unpack the crucial role that Thailand plays as a Champion Country of the Global Compact for Migration," says Michaela Friberg-Storey, the UN Resident Coordinator in Thailand.

Labour migration from neighbouring countries, particularly Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic and Myanmar, remains a significant driver of Thailand's economic growth, spurred by the country's improved infrastructure and opportunities. This was highlighted by over 2.3 million regular migrant workers from these neighbouring countries registered in Thailand.

However, many migrant workers continue to face challenges such as low wages, poor working conditions and limited access to social protection. Highlighting how migrants, particularly those in irregular situations, are at heightened risk of the precarious working and living conditions, the report calls for better legal and social protections.

"With the conflict in Myanmar intensifying, mobility flows toward Thailand, the need for comprehensive policies that address the specific needs and vulnerabilities of migrants has never been more urgent," emphasizes Géraldine Ansart, Chief of Mission at IOM Thailand and Coordinator of the UNMN in Thailand. "Expanding regular pathways to ensure all migrants are able to register, work decently and have access to basic services until they return home is [not only] critical for respecting Thailand's commitments toward the protection of migrants but also a key sustainable development strategy for the country."

The report delves into the profound impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and political instability in neighbouring countries on migration dynamics and patterns in Thailand. While border closures, economic downturns and restricted movement disrupted

the livelihoods of millions of migrants, the political instability has led to a surge in migrants entering through irregular channels, exacerbating humanitarian and development challenges.

Compared to estimates in 2019 Thailand Migration Report, the number of Myanmar migrants in irregular situations has doubled to 1.8 million. This figure likely somewhat underestimates the actual increase, given the hidden nature of irregularity and difficulty to estimate numbers of migrants from countries other than Myanmar.

"We hope that this report provides much needed evidence on longstanding trends and emerging challenges on migration and opportunities it brings for sustainable development," adds Ms Ansart.

With just over half a decade remaining until the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, it is critical to harness migration as a driver for achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. The promise of migration can only be fully realized through strengthened partnerships and collaboration between all stakeholders to translate policy commitments into right-based migration governance framework and systems that benefit both migrants and society as a whole.

The Thailand Migration Report 2024 is a publication jointly produced by members of the UN Network on Migration, namely: IOM, ILO, OHCHR, UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNODC, UN Women and WHO, with thanks to Sally Barber and Rosalia Sciortino for leading the coordination and editing of the report.

NAPTIP Scuttles Trafficking of Recruited Nigerians to Iraq; Intercepts 13 Victims at Naia, Abuja

The National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP) with the support of Partners, has intercepted 13 girls suspected to be victims of human trafficking en route to Baghdad, Iraq for sexual and labour exploitation.

The girls whose ages range between 19 to 39 years old were allegedly deceived and recruited by some faceless unregistered Labour Recruiters who are suspected to be agents of a larger criminal labour recruiting gang operating between Nigeria and some Middle East Countries.

They were incepted at the Nnamdi Azikwe International Airport, Abuja, shortly before departing for Iraq.

Similarly, the Operative of the Agency has sealed up a popular Three Stars Hotel located at the ever-busy Community of Kwali, Kwali Area Council of the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, and rescued 11underaged girls suspected of use for sexual expedition.

Luck however ran on the owner of the hotel as she was arrested while other supporting staff escaped.

The development came barely one month after Operatives of NAPTIP burst a private apartment located inside one of the highbrow estates in the heart of Abuja and rescued 9 pregnant girls suspected to be victims of human trafficking.

The interception of the Iraq-bound girls followed a tip-off by some concerned partners who noticed the unusual movement of some unknown faces at the departure lounge of the Airport in the company of some timidly looking girls all chorusing the same answer to different questions about their destination, and immediately alerted the Agency.

UNODC equips Haiti against organized crime

Haiti is anything but a Caribbean paradise, as violence continues to spiral out of control.

Criminal gangs spread terror across the country with an estimated 150 to 200 armed groups controlling about 85 percent of the capital, Port-au-Prince.

In their attempts to expand their territories and seize strategic locations, these groups have targeted critical infrastructure, including hospitals, schools, police stations and other key facilities.

The population remains trapped in fear, facing frequent shootings, kidnappings and mass looting.

Ongoing violence and instability are further exacerbated by the flow of illicit arms, drug trafficking, and underground markets, all fueled by deep-rooted corruption and money laundering.

Strengthening law enforcement and border security

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), with the generous support of the Government of Canada, is supporting the Haitian authorities in countering organized crime, including human trafficking and migrant smuggling.

To bolster law enforcement efforts, UNODC has delivered twelve patrol vehicles and nineteen motorcycles to the country's Border Police, a specialized unit of the Haitian National Police (POLIFRONT - Police Frontalière d'Haiti).

The newly supplied vehicles aim to enhance police mobility on the ground, response time and overall efficiency to help law enforcement regain control of critical areas and strengthen border security. They will also provide much-needed protection in hostile environments as officers serve and protect the Haitian people while carrying out their duties.

The delivery is part of a larger response led by the UNODC Human Trafficking and Migrant Smuggling Section and the Regional Office for Central America and the Caribbean.

At the request of Canada, additional equipment, including communication radios, personal protective equipment, drones, ballistic vests, shin guards, armored vehicles and computer equipment such as laptops and printers will be provided to further support Haitian security forces as they work to regain control of critical areas and strengthen border security by land, sea, and air. It also contributes to the ongoing fight against corruption and economic crimes.

The delivery of much needed vehicles takes place amidst a complex reality for those providing support in Haiti. Since November 2024 the international airport of Port-au-Prince has been closed and gangs continue to control the national road network limiting the efforts of international and national partners in country.

A worrying rise in human trafficking and migrant smuggling

Beyond attacks on civilians and infrastructure, as well as drug and arms trade, other crimes are currently on the rise. Of particular concern is the surge in human and child trafficking.

Exploiting widespread lawlessness, child malnutrition, inadequate education and lack of parental supervision, gangs recruit minors through deception or coercion.

They often use social media to lure children, reportedly offering payments of up to 200 USD.

According to the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), child recruitment into armed groups increased by 70 per cent, with an estimated 30 to 50 per cent of gang members in Haiti now being children.

At the same time, political instability, gang violence, food insecurity and economic turmoil are forcing more people to flee Haiti.

Desperate to escape, many are taking greater risks, often turning to migrant smugglers. Haitian nationals are increasingly being smuggled via dangerous sea routes.

UNODC remains committed to working with Haitian authorities and partners to dismantle the criminal networks and corruption destabilizing the country. The recently delivered patrol vehicles and forthcoming equipment will play a crucial role in strengthening their operational capacity to combat organized crime and protect Haiti's borders.

**The programme is funded with the generous support of the Government of Canada through its Anti-Crime Capacity Building Programme (ACCBP).*

TELEDYNE FLIR

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Nigerian agencies unite to combat organized crime with support from AFRIPOL and INTERPOL 36 arrests and USD 3 million seized in landmark operation

n a major blow to organized crime, 12 different Nigerian law enforcement agencies, supported by AFRIPOL and INTERPOL, have launched a sweeping operation named "Eagles´ Nest" that has resulted in the arrests of 36 individuals and seizures worth USD 3 million.

The operation (23-27 September 2024) brought together Nigerian authorities for a first-of-its-kind inter-agency initiative. Nigerian law enforcement agencies and criminal justice stakeholders working on a broad range of crime areas were involved in the operation, including financial crime and cybercrime as well as drug and human trafficking.

Following two months of preparation, national authorities carried out increased border checks, targeted raids at identified hotspots and followed up on actionable leads over five operational days. Most arrests were made for cyber-enabled fraud and the vast majority of the detained suspects were under the age of 35, reflecting a trend of greater youth involvement in organized crime.

Among the crimes uncovered, common tactics included 'romance baiting', in which criminals cultivate online relationships to manipulate victims into investing or transferring their money; investment and cryptocurrency scams, where perpetrators lure victims in fictitious financial schemes; and celebrity scams, which involve the impersonation of well-known figures to solicit money from fans. Three of the arrests were for sextortion, where the suspects were extorting money from victims to prevent the release of compromising or explicit material.

Notable seizures from the operation included 19 kg of cocaine, valued at 2.8 million USD; 51 kg of cannabis; five cars; two weapons; and 215 rounds of ammunition. The action days also exposed cases of human trafficking, with the identification of 12 victims who had been lured abroad with promises of work but were instead forced into sexual exploitation or forced labour. The investigation led to the arrest of a female recruiter, who had posed as a victim to evade detection, and the seizure of USD 16,000 from her account.

The Acting Executive Director of AFRIPOL, Jalel Chelba, said: "The success of this operation demonstrates the profound impact of coordinated efforts between national and international law enforcement bodies. AFRIPOL is dedicated to fostering partnerships that bridge the gaps in intelligence sharing and operational coordination, ensuring a united front against the complexities of transnational organized crime. This landmark initiative in Nigeria not only strengthens national capacities but also exemplifies the collective resolve of African member states to combat evolving criminal threats. Our close cooperation with INTERPOL was pivotal to the achievements of this operation and we will continue to work closely with our partners to promote security and stability across the continent."

Cyril Gout, INTERPOL's Acting Executive Director of Police Services, said: "West African Organized Crime Groups are considered to be among the most aggressive and expansionist criminal groups for their involvement in a broad range of illegal activities, from people smuggling, human trafficking, extortion and kidnapping to oil theft, cybercrime and money laundering. The success of this operation underscores the critical importance of sustained, multi-agency collaboration in disrupting these networks. By working together, at a national and international level we can effectively combat this global threat and bring justice to those affected by these crimes."

Reinforcing national capacity to strengthen global security

During the operation, coordinated by AFRIPOL's National Liaison Office and INTERPOL's National Central Bureau in Abuja, officers from both AFRIPOL and INTERPOL were deployed to support criminal intelligence analysis, assist operation coordination and to facilitate crosschecks against databases.

Bangladesh: Shaping a collaborative roadmap to counter human trafficking and migrant smuggling

The 2024 UNODC Global Report on Trafficking in Persons highlights a sobering reality—human trafficking remains a serious challenge in South Asia. In 2022 alone, over 8,000 victims were identified in the region, primarily women and boys, while another 2,200 victims from South Asian countries were detected in regions such as Europe and the Middle East. These numbers underscore the urgent need for strengthened national and international responses to combat human trafficking and migrant smuggling, two interlinked crimes that continue to exploit vulnerable populations.

In Bangladesh, trafficking and smuggling persist as significant concerns, exacerbated by socio-economic hardships, lack of employment opportunities, and the demand for cheap labor in neighboring countries and beyond. Criminal networks operate in secrecy, making detection and prosecution challenging despite government and civil society efforts.

Recognizing the need for a comprehensive and coordinated approach, UNODC, in partnership with the European Union (EU), has launched the "Preventing and Addressing Trafficking in Human Beings and the Smuggling of Migrants in South Asia" initiative. As part of this critical effort, a National Consultation on the Inception of GLO.ACT South Asia was organized in Dhaka with the Ministry of Home Affairs, bringing together 32 stakeholders, including representatives from key ministries, law enforcement agencies, UN bodies and civil society organizations.

Through a series of in-depth discussions, participants analyzed the major challenges facing Bangladesh in addressing human trafficking and migrant smuggling. They explored strategic priorities and outlined a collaborative roadmap for implementing GLO.ACT South Asia effectively.

The discussions highlighted the necessity of strengthening victim identification mechanisms, enhancing data-sharing across agencies, and implementing survivor-centered approaches to ensure rehabilitation and reintegration. The consultation also placed a strong emphasis on the role of civil society and community awareness in tackling these crimes.

The collaboration between UNODC, the EU, and national stakeholders signals a renewed commitment to protecting vulnerable individuals and dismantling trafficking networks, offering hope for a future where exploitation no longer thrives.

AFRIPOL's Successful Crackdown on Cross-Border Illicit Products: Operation OTAPI

OTAPI (AFRIPOL's Cross-Border Operation Against Illicit Products) has dismantled networks involved in trafficking prohibited products.

This operation brought together several African countries, including Nigeria, Benin, Togo, Chad, Cameroon, and the Central African Republic, in a coordinated effort to combat organized crime. It involved police, immigration, customs, and forestry services, with active participation from the AFRIPOL National Liaison Bureaus (NLBs) of the involved countries.

The operation mainly targeted trafficking in illicit products such as drugs, pharmaceuticals, small arms and light weapons (SALW), counterfeit and contraband goods, human trafficking, document fraud and environmental crime. Its main objective was to detect, disrupt and deter criminal networks active in the region, while capitalizing on joint efforts to overcome the challenges posed by porous borders and the limited resources of participating states.

The OTAPI data collection approach was based on operational intelligence combined with tactical interventions. The methodologies employed included:

a. Surveillance and field operations: Law enforcement teams set up checkpoints at land borders, airports, ports and other strategic locations to screen people, vehicles and goods.

b. Document verification: In high-risk areas such as Togo, digital verification tools were used to identify and detect falsified documents.

OTAPI's achievements have led AFRIPOL's Acting Executive Director, Mr Jalel Chelba, to point out that "Unfortunately, many factors enable criminal networks to pursue their harmful activities with impunity on the African continent. These factors include porous borders, insufficient human and technical resources, and low levels of inter- and intra-agency cooperation". It is precisely to strengthen this cooperation and coordinate the efforts of police services with each other and with other law enforcement entities that Operation OTAPI has been implemented. The aim is to neutralize all criminal networks operating across borders. Whether it's smuggling, trafficking in food products, drugs, pharmaceuticals, firearms, protected species or any other illicit product, nothing can escape the nets of the services involved in OTAPI.

The Acting Executive Director stated that "the results achieved by these brave officers, who watch over our security day and night, have exceeded our expectations. It is clear that together, the illicit activities of criminal networks cannot prosper. The African Union Police Cooperation Mechanism (AFRIPOL) will never give up to guarantee a safe Africa."

The Operation OTAPI has enabled the law enforcement services involved to seize illicit products and make a number of arrests:

In Benin, 4 people were arrested for human trafficking and 1 for falsifying travel documents. In addition, law enforcement officers checked 34,582 people at border entrances and exits, 6,614 vehicles and 27,143 travel documents, including passports and identity cards.

In Cameroon, the OTAPI operation achieved significant results in several crime categories. In the field of drug trafficking, 25 kg of cannabis were seized with a transport vehicle, as well as 7 bags

of Indian hemp, 349 small drug sachets, 35.42 grams of “cailloux”, 4 packets of cannabis, and 15 kg of cannabis buried in 30 parcels. In addition, 628 strands of cannabis, 57 additional strands, and 79 Tramadol tablets were intercepted. With regard to environmental crime, several live crocodiles were found in a vehicle abandoned by poachers. With regard to human trafficking, 2 Vietnamese victims were rescued after having been sexually exploited. Finally, for arms trafficking, a shipment of 3,000 rounds of M21 ammunition, 25 rounds of PA ammunition, 119 rounds of AK47 Kalashnikov ammunition, as well as knives and machetes, were confiscated.

In the Central African Republic, 37 people were arrested, 9 of whom were remanded in custody, with major seizures including 171 boxes of Tramadol (2,907,000 FCFA), 4 kg of Indian hemp (16,340 FCFA), 924 cartons of adulterated drinks (2,217,600 FCFA), as well as 3,152 boxes of stimulants and a dummy weapon.

In Nigeria, 13.30 kg of heroin concealed in backpacks were seized, with the arrest of 2 suspects, as well as 50 bags of 50 kg of smuggled rice and a stolen vehicle.

In Chad, 40 kg of cannabis, 2,000 Tramadol tablets and 160 cartons of adulterated drinks were seized, and 5 stolen vehicles, identified in INTERPOL’s database, were immobilized.

In Togo, a person from Nigeria was arrested in possession of 605 false visas from 10 different countries, concealed in a cool box; he was incarcerated after investigation.

The results achieved by AFRIPOL’s Operation OTAPI demonstrate the great need to combine efforts between law enforcement agencies in order to dismantle networks involved in the trafficking of prohibited products.

Niger State Governor Tasks Government at Sub-National Levels to Support NAPTIP to Tackle Human Trafficking and Violence Against Persons

The Executive Governor of Niger State, His Excellency, Mohammed Umaru Bago, has called on State Governors across the country to join hands with the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP) to tackle the issues of human trafficking and violence against persons in the Country.

The Governor observed that the phenomenon of human trafficking and violence against persons are issues of serious concern that require the collective support and collaboration of all state and non-state actors across sub-national levels of Government.

He stated this at the Niger State Liaison Office, Abuja, while receiving the Management of NAPTIP led by the Director General, Binta Adamu Bello, OON.

The Director General had visited the Governor as part of her strategic engagement with critical stakeholders in the fight against human trafficking.

The Governor said, “The focus on violence in persons and also trafficking in persons is very important, especially in Northern Nigeria. We have a lot of out-of-school children especially girls and also a lot of domestic violence issues arising from that. We also have issues of violence against women as a fallout of the insecurity in the region.

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SECURITY CHALLENGES ON SPAIN'S SOUTHERN MARITIME BORDER

By CRFS

The Alboran Sea is a natural barrier and a gateway, separating the economic stability and security of Europe from the struggles of Africa, where limited opportunities and instability drive migrants to seek a better life.

Migrants escaping conflicts, economic deprivation, and climate change make the perilous journey through the Sahel to Morocco, where Europe is, at the shortest crossing point on the 861-kilometre-long Andalusian coastline, only 15 kilometres away. Many use unseaworthy boats, and criminals often traffic migrants using small dinghies to evade detection.

Drug traffickers from across the world see the Alboran Sea as a relatively easy route into the lucrative European market. The Moroccan Rif mountains are one of the world's largest hashish-producing regions. Cocaine from South America via West Africa also travels north to Europe via this sea.

Without the constraints of cost, drug traffickers use high-speed boats, jet skis, fishing vessels, and even transatlantic semi-submersibles to make the journey.

The Guardia Civil, Spain's agency responsible for border control, faces enormous challenges in this 53,000-square-kilometre area east of the Gibraltar Straits, separating Spain from North Africa.

Maritime security and emerging threats

Since 2002, the Guardia Civil has relied on sensor technology known as the Integrated System of External Vigilance (or Sistema Integrado de Vigilancia Exterior in Spanish) to combat illegal immigration, drug trafficking, and other illicit activities. The system includes radar, Infrared, and video and has successfully bolstered Spain's capabilities to monitor and control its maritime borders.

However, threats crossing the Alboran Sea have evolved over the past twenty years. There are now threats on the surface, in the air, and the underwater domains over a vast area of sea.

Vessels have become smaller and faster, and emerging threats now come from aerial drones and unmanned underwater vehicles (UUVs). Custom-built aerial drones capable of carrying up to 25kg of drugs can take just 30–40 minutes to make the flight across the straits or be flown from a vessel anywhere along the coast. And, in 2022,

Spanish authorities seized a UUV designed to carry a load of 200kg.

Criminal evolution means threats are ever more challenging to detect. For example, radar may struggle to detect a semi-submersible and to discriminate between a bird and an aerial vehicle.

In this context, RF technology could augment existing systems by acting as an early warning system, detecting and geolocating suspected criminal activity, and feeding this RF intelligence into C2 systems in real-time.

How can RF technology detect threats?

RF sensors constantly monitor the electromagnetic spectrum and detect radio waves emitted by a transmitter at a given frequency. For example, a sensor could detect a Private Mobile Radio (PMR) operating in the VHF band between 136–174 MHz.

This data becomes helpful for border forces when command and control centers use software that can geolocate these signals. Imagine this scenario: a human trafficker is coordinating their operation using a PMR while crossing the Alboran Sea. If RF sensors detect a signal at 136 MHz without also detecting an automatic identification system (AIS) in the same place, this could indicate that the vessel's operator is trying to remain undetected.

Unmanned systems are likely to house several transmitters that emit radio waves—most likely from telemetry transmitters sending real-time flight data to a ground station or operator. RF sensors can detect these signals, and software can then geolocate them.

Adding spectrum monitoring capability primarily provides improved situational awareness; operators can make more

informed decisions in real time by understanding the spectrum environment. Detecting signals used for communication between trafficking boats and any coordinating parties allows authorities to gather intelligence on their location, direction, and possibly even the intent.

How could RF technology be deployed?

RF sensors can be deployed flexibly and monitored from any location with a network connection using spectrum monitoring and geolocation software. RF technology provides command and control with a tool to locate maritime targets beyond the horizon—providing additional intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) capabilities.

RF sensors on UAVs

Unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) equipped with RF sensors provide a highly flexible and responsive way to monitor vast maritime areas. By increasing the line of sight above the water, UAV-mounted sensors can geolocate suspicious signals more effectively than ground-based or ship-mounted sensors.

With advanced RF geolocation technology, UAVs can detect and track illicit radio transmissions, including push-to-talk radios and drone telemetry links, relaying real-time intelligence to command centers. By continuously monitoring RF emissions, UAVs enhance maritime domain awareness, covering areas beyond the reach of fixed sensors and enabling swift responses to threats.

Fixed-site wide area networks across the Spanish and Moroccan coastlines

Deploying a fixed RF sensor network along the Spanish and Moroccan coastlines would create a continuous monitoring capability across the Alboran Sea. These sensors, strategically placed at high-elevation sites and along coastal outposts, could detect by direction finding or triangulating signals from suspect vessels, drones, and traffickers using radios.

A cross-border initiative between Spain and Morocco could enable real-time data sharing between security agencies, improving joint situational awareness and facilitating coordinated interception operations. Fixed RF sensors would complement radar and infrared systems by detecting the radio signals of traffickers attempting to evade other forms of surveillance.

Maritime patrol vessels equipped with RF sensors

Maritime patrol vessels could be equipped with RF sensors to detect unauthorized communications at sea. These mobile sensors would enable patrols to detect and geolocate signals indicative of smuggling activities.

Conclusion

Spain's southern maritime border presents an immense security challenge, with threats emerging from the air, sea, and underwater domains. Through a network of fixed, mobile, and deployable sensors, RF technology provides a powerful means of monitoring illicit activities. A joint Spanish-Moroccan RF intelligence initiative could significantly enhance border security, disrupting human trafficking and drug smuggling operations while improving maritime safety in the region.

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World Wildlife Day 2025 highlights the need for resource mobilization to protect wildlife

March every year, the global community comes together to celebrate United Nations World Wildlife Day (WWD), recognizing the essential role that wild animals and plants play in sustaining ecosystems, economies and human well-being.

Under the slogan "Wildlife Conservation Finance: Investing in People and Planet", the 2025 edition of WWD places the spotlight on the need for innovative solutions to fund the protection of wildlife and wildlife habitat, and to ensure long-term conservation efforts.

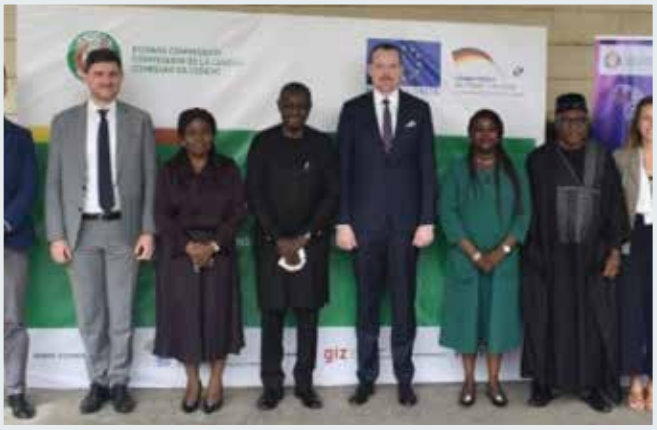
Customs administrations contribute to these efforts by combating the illegal wildlife trade. As explained by the WCO Secretary General, Ian Saunders, "Customs plays a fundamental role in protecting biodiversity through its mandate to stop the illegal wildlife trade, and facilitate the legal trade in endangered species of fauna and flora. By disrupting the illegal wildlife trade, we safeguard ecosystems and economies, and increase security. Wildlife criminals are constantly adapting and so must we, especially through intelligence-driven enforcement, strategic partnerships and cutting-edge technology."

While assisting Customs administrations in their efforts to combat trafficking in wildlife which undermines vital conservation work, the WCO has been supported by a range of donors and Customs administrations, who have provided the Organization with accredited and recognized experts to help administrations implement effective and efficient controls and deploy modern working methods leveraging data exchange at the international level. The WCO also collaborates with enforcement agencies, conservation organizations and other stakeholders to bolster its wildlife protection actions.

A pool of highly competent illegal wildlife trade experts has been set up to lead capacity-building activities and provide training and guidance to Customs administrations, thereby strengthening their capability in this domain. Sound management of funds, pooled resources, and strong partnerships with other organizations and law enforcement agencies have enabled the WCO to deliver training, develop practical guidance, organize enforcement operations, and support intelligence-sharing initiatives.

The Operation THUNDER series, a flagship global enforcement initiative conducted in collaboration with INTERPOL and other International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime (ICCWC) partners, has consistently resulted in major seizures and the dismantling of trafficking networks. Similarly, Operation PRAESIDIO III, which focused on enhancing border controls and dismantling organized wildlife trafficking networks in selected African and Asian countries, has had a substantial impact. Such operations not only lead to direct enforcement actions but also provide valuable intelligence, boost risk assessment capabilities and inform future policy development.

New initiative discusses options for tackling organised crime in West Africa



ECOWAS is partnering with civil society on developing and delivering effective responses to threats in the region.

Decisive efforts are needed by Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) member states, the ECOWAS Commission and civil society to deal with the root causes of organised crime, enhance service delivery and work to strengthen community resilience to transnational organised crime. Resolute actions against money laundering and corruption, which enable these illicit markets, are also vital.

These were among the issues discussed on 17 March at the first Regional Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue on Addressing Transnational Organised Crime in West Africa. The dialogue was launched in Abuja, Nigeria by ECOWAS Commission and Organised Crime: West African Response to trafficking (OCWAR-T) Project implementing partners.

It provided a platform for ECOWAS member states, the ECOWAS Commission and affiliated institutions, civil society organisations (CSOs), development partners and experts to explore new opportunities to tackle organised crime and enhance community resilience in West Africa.

Despite the significant efforts of ECOWAS member states and civil society, illicit economies linked to human trafficking, drugs and non-renewable resources remain a risk. The illicit trade in counterfeit medicines, methamphetamines and tramadol are reportedly growing in many regions of West Africa, as is the illicit trade of arms which threatens regional stability.

West Africa benefits from significant resilience to organised crime, but the region remains vulnerable to political setbacks, corruption and transnational organised crime. Further, in line with broader global trends, the COVID-19 pandemic has eroded state resilience and granted criminality new opportunities to flourish in West Africa.

The dialogue was also an opportunity for ECOWAS to launch the West African Research Network on Organised Crime. The network is part of the ECOWAS strategy to work with civil society to ensure effective responses to organised crime in line with the ECOWAS Political Declaration on the Prevention of Drug Abuse, Illicit Drug Trafficking and Organised Crimes in West Africa of 2008.

The event was convened by the OCWAR–T project, which supports the development and implementation of regional policy on transnational organised crime. OCWAR–T is an ECOWAS project commissioned by the German government, co-funded by the European Union and coordinated by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ). The ENACT project (Enhancing Africa's Response to Transnational Organised Crime) represented by the Institute for Security Studies and the Global Initiative Against Transnational Organised Crime, are the implementing partners supporting the coordination of this event, and implementing one element of the OCWAR–T project aimed at improving knowledge and legal coordination on organised crime and trafficking.

EXPECTATIONS OF THE NIGERIANS AT THE 2025 WORLD BORDER SECURITY CONGRESS

By Alhaji Ado Mu'azu, Deputy Director General, State Security Service, Nigeria and guest at the 2025 World Border Security Congress.

As Nigeria joins other participants to this global defining moment to advance the quest for border security, I welcome all from Idioroko in Ogun State to Lakunji, Aflao, Rio Grande River in Mexico Pyrevees Mountain, from San Marino to Sixaola River.

Tiny physical lines (sometimes imaginary lines) separates two countries with political agreement that establishes where one country's territorial sovereignty ends and the other's begins. Hence what we know today as borders.

It is imperative to acknowledge the importance of border control in trade relations between countries especially in regulating movement of persons, goods and services across nations.

From the National Security perspective, border plays crucial role in maintaining the sovereignty, security and economic or political stability of a country. It also helps

in preventing conflict arising from territorial disputes, monitor the movement of criminal elements, smuggling of goods and other cross-border crimes across national lines.

Many writers and researchers are of the opinion that porous borders exacerbates insecurity as Small and Light Weapons are been smuggled into West African countries.

In spite of numerous unmanned borders in West African Communities, lack of adequate human resource and logistics support allegations of corruptions practices from field officers hampers effective vigilance at Border Posts. Similarly, most border communities lack basic amenities such as good roads, portable water supply and efficient Health Care System which tends to push citizens along these borderlines to be indifferent in assisting Law Enforcement Agencies.

Political instability in some West African states often enables unregulated influx of foreign nationals and Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) for nefarious activities. For instance, even after the withdrawal of Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso from the Economic Community of West African States, citizens from the the trior were allowed to free movements and could maintain trade relationships with ECOWAS. Statistically, Nigeria, due to its economic and political stability, is the most preferred destination of citizens

of countries facing political unrest or economic turmoil in the region. General Ibrahim Babagida once said that Nigeria National Security is the security of her immediate Neighbours (Adeloyin 2019); instability in any Africa country affects Nigeria.

Nigeria undoubtably faces some cross-border security challenges, but most lethal is the farmers-herders conflicts which remain an existential threat to food security, Insurgency through gorilla warfare, cattle rustling, and proliferation of arms among others. These security threats can be linked to ECOWAS' free movement and transhuman protocols. This transhuman conflict which is associated with global warming, affects states like Benue, Taraba, Adamawa and Nasarawa, especially during farming season.

Ladies and gentlemen, It is an outstanding honour for me and other Nigerians to be part of this forum which gives opportunity to confront these security issues and collectively share ideas and solutions to quench migration crises and facilitate universally smart and safe border system in Nigeria, West Africa and Africa at large.

The Economic Commission for Africa, Africa Export Import Bank Africa Union Commission and the Economic Community of West African Commission have shed light on the often overlooked world of Informal Cross border trade in Africa. A pilot project launched in 2019 along the Abidjan Lagos border corridor which evolved into phase (2) in 2022 provided a comprehensive view of informal cross border trade dynamics.

A total value of $22.8 million trade was recorded with high percentage of women sharing business

transactions in a broader range of goods. (Re-thinking informal cross border trade in Africa). In the dynamic scenario of Global trade, Nigeria and indeed West Africa, remains a key player offering unique opportunities for sustainable development and international corporation with rapid growing emerging market.

Strategically positioned as a bridge between Europe and Africa, Nigeria, if the existing cross-border trade is properly harnessed, the country has great potentials to support Africans ongoing efforts at poverty alleviation. Therefore, like every other Nigerians, I strongly recommend effective and productive collaboration on securing our borders, eliminate threats that has reduced Economic activities, reduce ungoverned areas and restore business and economic activities in the disconnected regions. This effort can undoubtedably increase wealth generation, improve standard of living, and Gross Demestic Products and Per Capita amongst citizens of African sub-region. Above all, the foregoing could go a long way in clubbing insecurity in the Region.

Technology is transforming every facet of the border enforcement mission and expanding the limit of what was previously thought difficult to do. For instance, the convergence of operational technologies with information technologies and authomating force of Artificial Intelligence are becoming increasingly capable of dictating objects in every modality of trade and correlating technologies, bio metric systems Globally certified and other sensors, our expectation is also a collaboration that will mainstream Nigeria into evolving technologies to compliment our effort to mitigate wide range of threats of terrorism, trafficking illicit goods etc.

As technology plays a vital role in enhancing border security by providing innovative solutions to detect, prevent, and respond to various threats, however, it's essential to address the ethical, legal, and social implications of these technologies to ensure their responsible use.

Nigeria remains a regional power in Africa- playing relevant roles in International Affairs with positive history of peace efforts in Liberia, Sierra Leone etc. The President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria who doubles as Chairman ECOWAS Head of States is an example to the recognition of Nigeria in Regional and Global affairs. As border security remains one of the basic and necessary responsibility of a sovereign nation with a lot of positive economic and social development. We extend our hands of collaboration and remain very optimistic that together we will realize the vision of securing our borders and consolidating the gains of sustainable development.

DetectaChem unveil the SEEKER APEX Combo Kit – The Ultimate Threat Assessment Solution

DetectaChem is proud to unveil the SEEKER APEX Combo Kit, a game-changing solution that brings trace detection and Raman chemical identification together in one powerful package.

Designed for law enforcement, military, border security, and hazmat teams, this kit provides rapid, reliable, and comprehensive threat assessment in the field.

The SEEKER Pro delivers trace detection of narcotics and explosives with industry-leading sensitivity, giving first responders real-time results when every second counts. Meanwhile, the APEX R7 enhances operational capabilities with Raman chemical identification, enabling precise analysis of unknown powders, liquids, and substances—all within seconds.

By combining these two technologies, the SEEKER APEX Combo Kit ensures teams have the full spectrum of detection and identification tools at their fingertips. Whether scanning for hidden threats, identifying suspicious substances, or securing high-risk environments, this kit streamlines operations and enhances safety for operators in the field.

Travizory Partners with Saint Kitts and Nevis to Launch Advanced Electronic Travel Authorization System

Travizory Border Security SA is pleased to announce the signing of a contract with the government of Saint Kitts and Nevis to implement a state-of-the-art Electronic Travel Authorization (eTA) system. Set to launch in Spring 2025, this initiative positions Saint Kitts and Nevis as the first nation in the Caribbean to adopt such advanced border management technology.

The eTA system is a cornerstone of the government's vision to transform Saint Kitts and Nevis into a Sustainable Island State through digital innovation. The eTA will enhance national security, streamline traveler processing, and elevate the tourism experience by integrating cutting-edge technologies, including artificial intelligence and facial biometrics.

Speaking at a stakeholder meeting to introduce the new system, Prime Minister and Minister of National Security, Citizenship and Immigration, the Honourable Dr. Terrance M. Drew, emphasized the significance of this development:

"Saint Kitts and Nevis is proud to lead the region in adopting this innovative system. The eTA not only strengthens our security but also simplifies processes for travelers and citizens, reducing wait times, enhancing efficiency, and elevating our tourism experience.

Sirius Insight expands its border security services

Since exhibiting at last year's Congress in Istanbul, Sirus Insight has experienced a hugely busy year expanding its border security services overseas.

Ian Clarke, Sirius' Director Business Development told Border Security Report that "we're seeing a growing appreciation by nations that they can have better border security by embracing the use of smart software, like our Insight platform, that fuses data from low cost commercial sensors across covering a much wider area." Using an example to prove his point, in April last year the British Government called on Sirius to support an overseas territory facing an increased risk caused by maritime threats to internal stability and regional security. Enhancing the existing surveillance arrangements, Sirius installed two off shore sensor sites in priority zones within just one month, then a further two sites in the following weeks, transforming the watchkeepers' understanding of activities afloat and acting as a deterrence, even covering remote locations without power. One year on and Sirius is supplying a layered maritime surveillance system using aerial and shore sensors that increase warning and response times which ensure an operational edge.

The Head of the UK Joint Maritime Security Centre (JMSC) commented: "Sirius Insight demonstrated remarkable agility and speed of response, working together with JMSC to understand the operational requirements." Noting the wider advantages he continued: "as well as the immediate tactical advantages, this contributed to regional information sharing and helped to strengthen relationships with partners."

ClanTect have added enhanced features to their mobile wireless human presence detection system

Following the launch of the ClanTect MDT Mobile, customers around the world were quick to adopt this highly portable new generation of Human Presence Detection System, specifically designed for mobile patrol units and vehicle check points (VCP's).

From the start it was clear that this new all wireless mobile system offered border agencies far greater operational flexibility providing a fast, highly accurate, non-intrusive, roadside system for detecting the presence of human beings hiding within vehicles, trucks, trailers, and containers.

ClanTect have continued to develop the system and have recently introduced a warning system which activates an audible alarm if the search vehicle travels away from the control unit with the sensors still magnetically attached. This added feature ensures that no sensors are lost if users forget to remove them following an inspection. The new enhanced wireless system also features advanced sensor health monitoring and software selectable transmission frequency and signal power to boost the communication range.

ClanTect's CEO, Professor Steve Daley said: "Backed by our years of scientific expertise, we pride ourselves on being able respond rapidly to customer requirements and bring new functionality and innovation to our products with cutting-edge solutions tailored to their needs".

Thexovision Showcases SightBooster Software for Enhanced Border Surveillance in Adverse Conditions

Thexovision, a provider of real-time software for video processing in bad weather has recently showcased the capabilities of its SightBooster technology in enhancing visibility for border security operations.

Through a successful field test conducted with its Kazakh partner TNS Service, Thexovision demonstrated how SightBooster can significantly improve surveillance in challenging environments such as dense fog.

Using a PTZ security camera with standard H.264 video encoding, Thexovision compared the original footage captured in fog to the same video processed by SightBooster. The SightBooster-enhanced video revealed distant targets with notably greater clarity and detail compared to the original footage.

"Maintaining situational awareness is critical for effective border security, especially when faced with poor visibility conditions," said Milan Tresch, CEO of Thexovision. "The successful demonstration of SightBooster highlights its potential to empower our partners with enhanced surveillance capabilities in adverse environments.

Thexovision's proprietary image processing algorithms are designed to extend the effective distance range of camera-based monitoring.

Travel to Europe app for European Member States

Following market scanning and testing, Inverid was announced as the supplier for passport verification within the Travel to Europe app which uses Inverid's solution ReadID. Inverid will also include facial matching, liveness and face quality checks via its long-time partner iProov.

The Entry/Exit System (EES) has been created to register third-country nationals, both short-stay visa holders and visa exempt travellers, each time they cross an EU external border. The system registers amongst other information the individual's reason for travel, name, travel document, biometric data (fingerprints and captured facial images) and the date and place of entry and exit.

The mobile Travel app allows non-EU travellers with valid biometric passports to voluntarily pre-register their travel document data and facial image for the Entry/Exit System (EES) through their smartphone before arriving at a border crossing point.

The purpose of the app, proven through a pilot project with Swedish authorities at Arlanda airport in 2024, is to reduce processing times at the border. This benefits border authorities and travellers alike. The app is not designed to replace border control procedures but aims to make them smoother and faster.

New BORDERLINK research project sets ambitious targets

The new EU-funded BORDERLINK research project has some ambitious targets and is destined to make a significant contribution to the Customs Control Equipment Instrument (CCEI) aims and the planned reform of the Customs Union.

BORDERLINK will enhance Customs' capabilities and performance at EU borders by advancing the detection and identification of threat materials, improving training, communication and data sharing.

Importantly, it will also help to strengthen supply chain controls and promote the Green Customs Initiative.

The Cross-border Research Association (CBRA) is exhibiting on Stand #34 at the World Border Security Congress and we will also be very focussed on our other projects CONNECTOR, PARSEC, MELCHIOR and PEN-CP, so do come along and speak to us about your interests and expertise. We are particularly looking to talk to Customs and Border Security professionals that would like to be part of the CONNECTOR Stakeholder Group

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Developing Border Strategies Through Co-operation and Technology

SAVE THE DATES

Austria's border security faces a complex set of challenges, largely stemming from its geographical location and its participation in the Schengen Area. A primary concern is managing irregular migration flows, which fluctuate significantly due to geopolitical instability in various regions. This puts pressure on Austria's capacity to effectively screen and process asylum seekers.

The inherent nature of the Schengen Area, while facilitating free movement, also presents vulnerabilities. The potential for secondary migration, where individuals move from one Schengen state to another, necessitates close cooperation with neighbouring countries. However, differing national policies and capacities can complicate these efforts.

Furthermore, the rise of transnational crime, including human trafficking and smuggling, adds another layer of complexity to border security. Austrian authorities must balance the need for stringent controls with the imperative to uphold human rights and international obligations.

The evolving security landscape, with threats such as terrorism and hybrid warfare, also requires constant adaptation of border security measures. This necessitates investment in advanced surveillance technologies and enhanced intelligence sharing. The need to maintain public confidence in border security, while respecting the principles of open borders within the EU, creates a delicate balancing act for Austrian policymakers.

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.

Join us in Vienna, Austria on 14th-16th April 2026 for the next gathering of international border security, protection and migration management professionals.

www.world-border-congress.com

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