BORDER SECURITY REPORT

COVER STORY
NAVIGATING THE COMPLEXITIES OF MARITIME BORDER SECURITY CHALLENGES

World Border Security Congress

25th-27th March 2025
Madrid, Spain

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Patrolling the Periphery - Developing Border Strategies Through Co-operation and Technology

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Spain's vast coastline and strategic location between Africa and Europe present unique challenges for the National Police and Guardia Civil.

Spain faces a constant influx of migrants seeking a better life in Europe. The Canary Islands and the enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla, bordering Morocco, are popular entry points. Patrolling these vast stretches, especially maritime borders, requires significant resources.

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The country, and region's, border security landscape is constantly evolving. By addressing these challenges through international collaboration, innovative technologies, and strategic resource allocation, the international border security community can strive towards a more secure future.

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

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Climate Crisis, What Climate Crisis?

As Delhi recorded an all-time high temperature of 52.9 degrees Celsius (127.22 Fahrenheit) on the 29th May and extreme heat conditions gripped the whole of the north and western parts of India, on the same day the Red Cross and Red Crescent Climate Centre, World Weather Attribution and Climate Central, released a report looking at the role climate change played in increasing the number of extreme heat days around the world over the last twelve months.

While it is well known that 2023 was the hottest year on record the report says that Extreme heat is known to have killed tens of thousands of people over the last 12 months, but the real number is likely in the hundreds of thousands or even millions. Unlike sudden 'event' weather disasters, heatwaves kill more slowly and less obviously; and they are often exacerbators of pre-existing medical conditions.

Sadly, as is always the case, the worst affected by these extreme weather conditions are those least able to help themselves such as the very young, the old, the sick, and of course the poor.

There are currently ongoing heatwaves across the Sahel, including in Senegal, Guinea, Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, Nigeria and Chad. And continuing extreme heatwaves in Asia, across Bangladesh, Myanmar, Nepal, Malaysia and The Philippines.

And of course, when the crops have failed and livestock die, often the only option for those that are strong enough is to get on the move. This is especially true for those already trying to scratch a living on marginal agricultural land.

According to the UN Food and Agriculture Organization, nearly 1.75 billion people live in 'remote less-favoured' and 'marginal agricultural' areas and nearly 1.6 (out of 1.75) billion are in developing countries.

That's an awful lot of people. And sure, they are not all going to move, and those that do are not all going to move at once, but even a relatively small percentage adds up to an awful lot of people needing help and assistance and a new place to call home.

Now most of the burden of refugees fleeing climate disasters will fall upon their immediate neighbours, but where whole regions are affected that may simply not be an option.

So, until the world's richer nations develop a global approach to helping poor nations cope with climate-related disasters, we can expect an ever-growing stream of people seeking safety and a better life for themselves and their children heading for our borders.

Tony Kingham
Editor

World Migration Report 2024 Reveals Latest Global Trends and Challenges in Human Mobility

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) launched the World Migration Report 2024, which reveals significant shifts in global migration patterns, including a record number of displaced people and a major increase in international remittances.

IOM Director General Amy Pope formally released the report in Bangladesh, which stands at the forefront of migration challenges, including emigration, immigration and displacement.

"The World Migration Report 2024 helps demystify the complexity of human mobility through evidence-based data and analysis," IOM Director General Amy Pope said at the launch. "In a world grappling with uncertainty, understanding migration dynamics is essential for informed decision-making and effective policy responses, and the World Migration Report advances this understanding by shedding light on longstanding trends and emerging challenges."

The report highlights that international migration remains a driver of human development and economic growth, highlighted by a more than 650 per cent increase in international remittances from 2000 to 2022, rising from USD 128 billion to USD 831 billion. The growth continued despite predictions from many analysts that remittances would decrease substantially because of COVID-19.

Of that 831 billion in remittances, 647 billion were sent by migrants to low– and middle-income countries. These remittances can constitute a significant portion of those countries' GDPs, and globally, these remittances now surpass foreign direct investment in those countries.

Highlighting key findings, the report reveals that while international migration continues to drive human development, challenges persist. With an estimated 281 million international migrants worldwide, the number of displaced individuals due to conflict, violence, disaster, and other reasons has surged to the highest levels in modern-day records, reaching 117 million, underscoring the urgency of addressing displacement crises.

Migration, an intrinsic part of human history, is often overshadowed by sensationalized narratives. However, the reality is far more nuanced than what captures headlines. Most migration is regular, safe, and regionally focused, directly linked to opportunities and livelihoods. Yet, misinformation and politicization have clouded public discourse, necessitating a clear and accurate portrayal of migration dynamics.

By choosing Dhaka as the report's launch site, IOM not only highlights the country's efforts in supporting vulnerable migrants and fostering pathways for regular migration but also recognizes Bangladesh's important role in shaping global migration discourse and policy.

As a Global Compact for Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration Champion country, Bangladesh has demonstrated a strong commitment to addressing migration issues and implementing policies that safeguard migrants' rights. This proactive engagement aligns with IOM's strategic objectives, making Bangladesh an ideal location to launch the 2024 World Migration Report.

IOM's World Migration Report, with its innovative digital tools and comprehensive analysis, aims to help dispel myths, provide critical insights, and inspire meaningful action in addressing the challenges and opportunities of human mobility.

NAVIGATING THE COMPLEXITIES OF MARITIME BORDER SECURITY CHALLENGES

By ADG S Paramesh, PTM, TM,
Additional Director General, Indian
Coast Guard

Grasping the intricacies surrounding maritime border challenges is paramount to recognizing the multifaceted nature of safeguarding sea borders. This article embarks on a journey to dissect the disparities between land and sea borders, unveiling the nuanced concerns inherent in each realm. Through a meticulous comparative analysis of land border dynamics and sea border security, this article endeavours to shed light on the myriad challenges faced and delve into prospective solutions.

The endeavour at hand involves delving into the unique dynamics of land border management before navigating through the complexities of securing sea borders. This exploration aims to illuminate the array of challenges encountered and present viable solutions.

The management of land and sea borders stands as a cornerstone of national security, with each domain presenting its own distinct set of obstacles. Land borders traverse

diverse terrains, spanning deserts, mountains, forests, and urban landscapes, thereby posing unique challenges for monitoring and control. These borders encounter transnational threats such as illegal immigration, drug trafficking, smuggling, and potential terrorism, necessitating concerted efforts in multi-agency coordination and intelligence sharing.

Advanced surveillance technologies, including drones, sensors, and satellite imaging, play pivotal roles in monitoring and fortifying land borders, alongside requisite infrastructure such as fences, barriers, checkpoints, and manned surveillance towers.

In stark contrast, maritime borders, with their vast and often unpredictable expanses, present an unparalleled challenge in terms of security management. The complexities of international waters and the sheer expanse of maritime territory highlight the immense challenge of effectively securing sea borders.

The imperative to secure sea borders extends beyond safeguarding territorial integrity to encompass a myriad of threats lurking within the undulating waves. From illicit trafficking to environmental degradation, the challenges within the maritime domain are as diverse as they are daunting.

The vastness of the sea impedes efforts to monitor and detect unauthorized crossings or illicit activities, rendering seas and oceans susceptible to a spectrum of
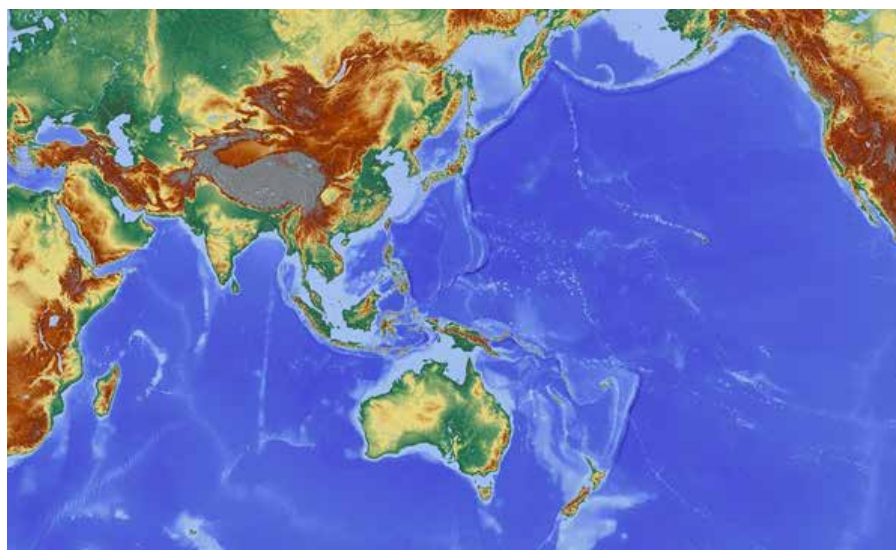
nefarious activities, including piracy, illegal fishing, human trafficking, and smuggling of goods and narcotics. These activities often unfold in international waters, necessitating collaboration with other nations and maritime organizations.

The clandestine nature of illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing epitomizes the challenges posed, operating with impunity amidst regulatory gaps and loopholes. Effectively combating IUU fishing demands a coordinated international response, bolstered by strengthened enforcement mechanisms, advanced surveillance technologies, and enhanced transparency within the seafood supply chain.

The world's oceans are under siege from a silent yet potent threat: vessels' callous discharge of untreated bilge water. This practice, emblematic of a disregard for environmental stewardship, not only symbolizes a systemic issue but also serves as a potent catalyst for

the unchecked proliferation of algae, unleashing a cascade of ecological consequences.

Untreated bilge water, often likened to a toxic cocktail, contains a harmful mixture of pollutants, nutrients, and various contaminants. When vessels release this untreated bilge water into marine environments, it creates a veritable buffet for algae. The abundance of nutrients acts as a catalyst, fuelling the rapid growth and multiplication of algae to unprecedented scales and intensities.

The consequences of unchecked algal proliferation are dire. As these algae populations explode, they create what are known as algal blooms. These blooms can blanket large swathes of the ocean, altering the marine ecosystem's delicate balance.

One of the most alarming outcomes is the formation of oxygen-deprived "dead zones." In these zones, the excessive growth of algae consumes vast amounts of oxygen, leaving

marine life struggling to survive. Fish, shellfish, and other aquatic organisms suffocate, leading to mass die-offs and significant disruptions to marine food webs.

Furthermore, the effects extend far beyond the discharge's immediate vicinity. Algal blooms can drift with ocean currents, spreading their harmful effects across vast distances. Coastal communities, reliant on healthy marine ecosystems for sustenance and livelihoods, bear the brunt of these impacts. The collapse of fisheries leads to a decline in tourism, thereby jeopardizing the overall health of coastal economies.

The ecological consequences of untreated bilge discharge extend beyond the creation of dead zones and disruption of marine ecosystems. These events trigger a domino effect, leading to broader environmental degradation and the loss of biodiversity. The long-term health and resilience of our oceans hang in the balance.

Addressing this pressing challenge requires a multifaceted approach. First and foremost, stringent regulations must be enacted to prevent the discharge of untreated bilge water into marine environments.

Vessels must be equipped with effective bilge water treatment systems to ensure that any discharged water meets rigorous environmental standards. Additionally, enhanced monitoring and enforcement mechanisms are necessary to hold accountable those who flout these regulations.

Furthermore, raising awareness among ship owners, operators, and crew members about the environmental consequences of bilge discharge is essential. Education and training initiatives can empower maritime stakeholders to adopt more sustainable practices and foster a culture of environmental responsibility within the industry.

Ultimately, combating the callous discharge of untreated bilge water is not just a matter of environmental stewardship; it is a moral imperative. The health of our oceans is intricately linked to the well-being of our planet and all its inhabitants. By taking decisive action to address this challenge, we can safeguard marine ecosystems for future generations and ensure a more sustainable future for our planet.

The prospect of unintentional hazardous and oil spills, coupled with breaches of maritime regulations, represents yet another imminent danger, emphasizing the critical need for thorough preventive measures and efficient response strategies. Such incidents not only pose a significant risk to the environment but also result in substantial economic losses. Therefore, it is imperative to develop comprehensive protocols aimed at preventing these occurrences and ensuring swift and effective responses to minimize environmental devastation and mitigate the financial impact on affected communities and industries.

Against this backdrop of maritime challenges, the looming spectre of piracy and the nexus between narcotics trafficking and terrorism further underscore the imperative for robust maritime security measures. Addressing these multifaceted challenges necessitates a steadfast commitment to upholding international maritime laws and regulations, with frameworks

such as the UNCLOS serving as guiding beacons for collaborative governance.

The challenges are further exacerbated by the perilous practice of shipbreaking, which commonly occurs beyond the purview of effective regulation or within facilities lacking adequate monitoring. In these settings, the improper handling and disposal of hazardous materials and pollutants throughout the dismantling procedure pose a significant threat to both marine ecosystems and human health. This disregard for proper protocols casts

safety, security, and prosperity of our cherished maritime domain. Let us remain steadfast in our commitment to championing sustainable maritime practices and safeguarding the rule of law at sea.

a foreboding shadow, extending over the well-being of marine life and the communities reliant on these ecosystems for sustenance and livelihoods, with long-lasting environmental degradation and health risks looming ominously on the horizon.

Central to our efforts in mitigating maritime risks is adherence to guidelines from esteemed institutions like the International Maritime Organization (IMO), as well as the implementation of frameworks such as the International Ship and Port Facility Security (ISPS) Code. These frameworks advocate for stringent measures aimed at fortifying maritime borders through international cooperation, underscoring the importance of fostering partnerships and information-sharing arrangements among nations to address transnational maritime security threats.

The principles of freedom of navigation and innocent passage, while fundamental to global maritime governance, demand resilient surveillance systems and collaborative law enforcement efforts to ensure the safety and security of maritime domains. The strategic significance of the Indian subcontinent, with its critical maritime chokepoints and diverse maritime interests, underscores the necessity for specialized security solutions to safeguard vital maritime channels.

In conclusion, the protection of maritime borders transcends mere policy prescriptions, embodying a moral imperative to preserve the sanctity of our oceans for future generations. By confronting emerging challenges with resolve and collaboration, nations can fortify their sea border security and uphold the principles of maritime governance, thereby ensuring the

Mauritania joins the Global Vulnerable Targets Programme: UNOCT and CTED conclude in-depth consultations to identify national needs and priorities

Under the United Nations Global Programme on Countering Terrorist Threats against Vulnerable Targets ("Global Vulnerable Targets Programme"), the United Nations Office of Counter Terrorism (UNOCT) and the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED) organized in-depth consultations with Mauritanian entities in charge of safety and security of critical infrastructure and "soft" targets or public places in Nouakchott. The consultations, led by CTED with UNOCT's support, took place in partnership with the Government of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania and with the support of the United Nations Resident Coordinator's Office in Nouakchott.

This event represents the first stage of UNOCT's

technical assistance package for Mauritania in the area of strengthening security and resilience of national critical infrastructure and "soft targets" against terrorist threats and challenges.

The consultations' methodology builds on CTED's and UNOCT's mandates aimed to identify Mauritania's needs and priorities in the area of safety and security of vulnerable targets. The three-day substantive discussions on relevant legal, institutional, and operational frameworks brought together 20 officials from 8 national ministries and agencies under the leadership and coordination role by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Mauritania.

As a result of these discussions, UNOCT and CTED will support the elaboration of Mauritania's national plan of action (or "roadmap") on vulnerable targets protection, which will include concrete recommendations to support national ministries, entities, and other relevant stakeholders. The document will identify strengths, needs and priorities for enhancing the country's national capacity in support of the implementation of UN Security Council resolutions 2341 (2017) and 2396 (2017) and following the recommendations of the 2018 Addendum to the Madrid Guiding Principles on Foreign Terrorist Fighters (S/2018/1177)PDF, as well as the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy and its Review resolutions.

Polish Border Guard officers tackle an organized criminal group

Officers from the Border Guard Station in Radom dismantled an organized criminal group specializing in organizing the illegal crossing of the Polish border by foreigners. 10 people were detained in the case, including employees of one of the district labor offices.

The dismantling of an organized criminal group, including the arrest of 10 people – Polish citizens and the search of suspicious apartments and office premises of the district labor office, took place in the Masovian Voivodeship. As a result of the search, Radom Border Guard officers seized several dozen

data carriers on site, including SIM cards, pendrives, computers and mobile phones, as well as several dozen company stamps, bank documentation, certificates and statements. Four cars with a total value of PLN 187,000 were seized as part of future fines. PLN and financial resources in the amount of PLN 187,650 and EUR 1,800.

The suspects are accused of participating in an organized criminal group that were operating in the period from 2019 to 2024 in the southern counties of the province.

BALANCING BORDER SECURITY: CONVENTIONAL METHODS AND CONTEMPORARY MEANS

By Major Nick Bennett and Doctor Richard Warnes PhD

Border Security in the context of counter-terrorism (CT) has long been a topic of debate in terms of how a government can balance its resources to provide protection to its population. Over the past decade, terrorism has, on average, accounted for around 24,000 deaths per year, with cross-border terrorist attacks remaining a continuous threat and vulnerability for most countries. This does not factor in the impact of cross-border planning for terrorist attacks, and also the crime-terrorism nexus, whereby cross-border criminal activity directly funds terrorist activity. The overarching picture is that border security is a vital component in a government's wider CT measures. As such, from a policy level down to tactical implementation, understanding the threats and how to balance conventional methods with contemporary means is essential to providing coherent and long-lasting security.

However, governments must also balance the need for secure borders with the economic requirement to maintain a flow of people and goods across the border in order to maintain trade and/or tourism. While the scale of this balance will clearly depend on the threat and level of operational permissiveness around the border, there is usually a trade-off that has to be made between ensuring security while maintaining the level of flows. When considering these flows of people and goods in relation to border management, there is also a distinction to be made between temporary and longer-term flows, as well as between regular and irregular flows. This concept regarding types of flow and their link to the management of the border, has previously been outlined in a report on the 'Futures of Borders' by the European Border Agency FRONTEX.

There are various factors that should be considered when establishing, improving or maintaining border security. Various case studies can help draw attention to this; three excellent examples are: Lebanon, Türkiye and Tunisia. All of which emphasise the need for a balanced approach to border security, outlining the challenges of the 21st Century and why a government cannot discard conventional methods, nor shy away from investment in technology. These lessons are particularly relevant in areas where borders are either contested or militarised.
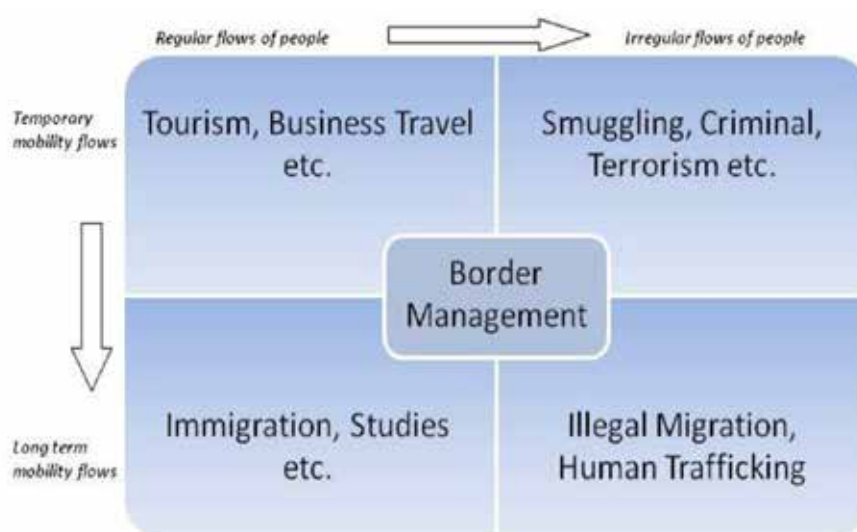

Figure 1: Border Security and Types of cross-border flows

Control or Security?

While it can be acknowledged border security is a reasonably abstract term with no clear consensus in definition, the aim of border security can be understood primarily in terms of what it is not. Namely, border control and border protection. Figure 1 demonstrates where border security is relevant by comparison to other mechanisms used. Whereas control exists on most borders to manage goods and people, and protection also exists to mitigate against varying degrees of violence or criminality, security can be understood, in the context of counter-terrorism, to be a term that guards a nation's borders against acts of terrorism. There is obviously a wider use to this term, that encompasses state and non-state threats, though in the context of this article, the term relates to terrorism.

Placing the requirement for border security in a geographical sense is equally a difficult task. Arguably most countries in the world would opt for a form of 'border security' against terrorism, though arguably the term can be too easily conflated with the aforementioned terms – border control and protection. The problem with doing so, is that every issue regarding a border can be viewed as a 'security' matter, and thus a government risks consciously or inadvertently engaging in the process of securitisation – whereby political matters are conveyed as extreme security problems, resulting in political bandwidth and resources being focused on areas that do not require it.

Border security as a concept should be applied to those borders where the situation reaches a point of operational and tactical complexity, and security measures can be used to allow policy-makers time and space to develop
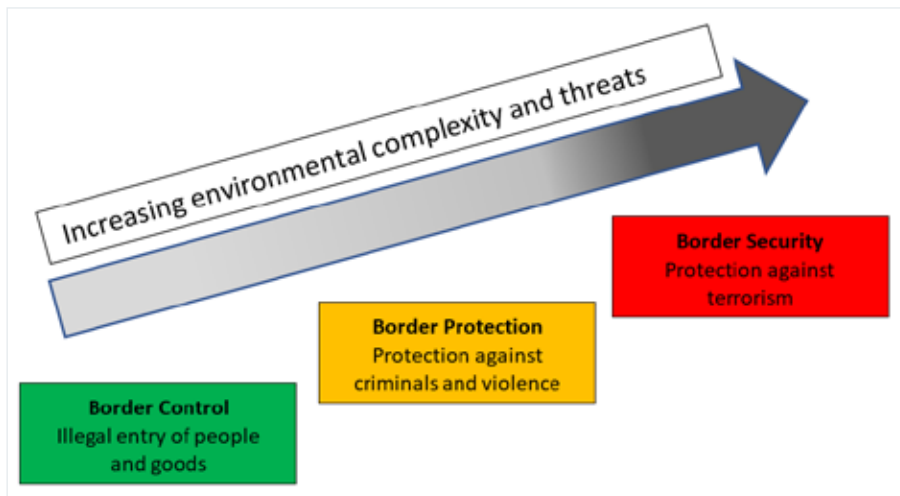
Figure 2 : The changing nature of threats in relation to borders

longer lasting plans. Or, where the threat level is such that control and protection mechanisms are no longer sufficient to manage the possible consequences of terrorists accessing the border. In these circumstances, a balance of conventional methods as well as contemporary developments are required to effectively mitigate potential or actual acts of terrorism.

Conventional methods – an insight into the Lebanese border

Using Lebanon as a case study, a practitioner or academic, can gain a valuable insight into how conventional methods still hold a great deal of value, not least where the ground beyond a country's sovereignty territory is ungoverned or permissible to terrorist groups. At the height of the Syrian Civil War, where Da'esh had gained territorial control of large swathes of the country, the terrorist group attempted to make various ground incursions into Lebanon. Being a small state,

Lebanon does not benefit from the strategic depth of terrain. At its widest point, the distance is only around 35 miles from the Syrian border to Beirut on the coast. Therefore, security at the borders is paramount to protecting the state – both physically and politically.

With assistance primarily from the UK and US, Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) were able to harden their borders, constructing physical outposts along the border with Syria. This served a number of purposes, but crucially, it defined the border area and then allowed for an operational platform to exist. Having secure areas to defend, then permitted the LAF to expand their operations, patrolling the areas in-between and providing integral and organic mutual support between positions.

The drawback of this approach is that it is underpinned by shorter-term investments, the approach is far more linear in terms of

understanding and responding to threats, and as the measures tend to be more static, the security stance is less proactive. Ultimately, in the areas where border security is required, policies need to be developed where more contemporary means are employed to complement conventional methods.

Contemporary means – embracing technology on the Turkish borders

The measures that a state can take to enhance border security using technological means are not exhaustive. Primarily, the use of data – collecting, processing and exploiting – is one of the fundamental means of developing border security. This point is wider than simply collecting biometrics and processing goods and individuals at borders, an activity that would fall into the category of 'control' or 'protection'. While this data is useful in border security, there is more that can be harnessed from the collection of data.

Concepts such as machine learning and artificial intelligence, as well as the use of sensors, are predominantly driven by data collection, and it is this that can be used in contested and high-threat areas to complement conventional methods. The use of higher-end technology to aid human decision-making is arguably how the most secure borders will operate in the future, if not already. Figure 3 is illustrative of how technological

assets can be integrated with 'hardened' security features to allow for more informed and data driven human decision-making. So-called 'Smart-Borders' utilise sensors that will collect data and drive machine learning and AI-based assets to dynamically assess threats and over time improve their ability to provide more comprehensive border security.

Using Türkiye as a case study, it is possible to see how this type of technology can be used to counter terrorist activity on borders. Türkiye is a great example of a country that has to contend with myriad terrorist threats, enhanced by the geographical terrain that surrounds them, and compounded by the flow of refugees that seek entry into the country. Most notably, the PKK operate in ungoverned space beyond Türkiye's borders, as do Da'esh and AQ. Türkiye has opted to invest heavily in technology as a means to future-proof their border security, using an integrated system of masts that have surveillance radars, gunshot detection systems and wireless sensors. The result is to complement existing structures, and intelligently focus on areas where threats are higher, using technology to provide cover in border areas where the threat of terrorist activity can be less easily detected by human resources.

Conventional methods and Contemporary means – a hybrid approach on the Tunisian borders

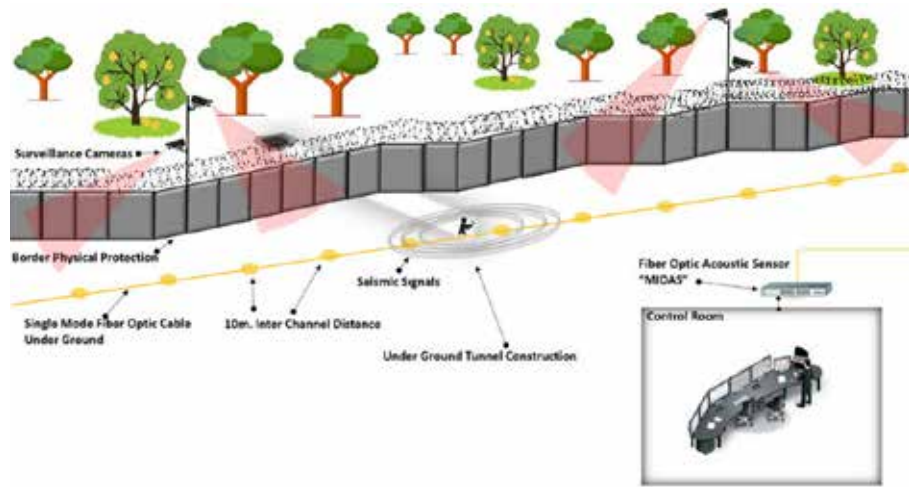The example of Tunisia provides

Figure 3 : A 'smart' border using sensors, AI and Machine Learning to inform decision making.

a useful example of a hybrid approach to the security of its borders, combining both physical barriers and patrols to 'harden' the border, along with the introduction of advanced technology to detect threats, alert border personnel and collect data and intelligence. Tunisia's borders predominantly combine underpopulated desert and mountainous areas, with terrorist threats emanating from both its Algerian and Libyan borders. This is particularly the case with the 'ungoverned space' of Libya, with two high-profile terrorist attacks in Tunisia against tourists in 2015 linked to Da'esh networks in Libya. The following year, a cross border raid by up to 100 Da'esh fighters led to two days of heavy fighting between Tunisian security forces and Da'esh fighters in the border city of Ben Guerdane.

In response to these incidents, Tunisia constructed sand berms and major water filled trenches along the Libyan border. More recently fencing has been added, and these physical barriers are regularly patrolled by Tunisian armed forces and border security personnel. With the support of various countries, Tunisia has enhanced these conventional physical measures with technical sensors, intruder detection and surveillance technology, particularly in the more remote desert areas between the two countries.

However, the integration of technological systems is costly. Arguably, the cost is higher initially, though technology will still evolve, and so there is likely to be a continued financial burden to properly use this type of border security. Governments need to address this in a number of ways. The first, is to invest heavily in national defence industry, providing the economic incentives to allow

the private sector to grow. The second, is to forge closer links between the areas of the military and law enforcement organisations that specialise in border security, and private companies. This should allow for intelligence sharing, research and development in conjunction with operational border security organisations, and a programme of military placements into commercial organisations. Finally, there should be greater collaboration on an inter-state basis, to share technology and benefit from the unique insights and experiences that each country has regarding their own border security circumstances.

Conclusion

The nature of border security with regards to counter-terrorism is complex and constantly evolving. The first, and crucial, component is to understand what is actually meant by border security in relation to CT, and applying this academically before then taking practical measures. Ultimately, borders are too often prone to 'securitisation', and so are conflated with measures that would more appropriately be categorised as control or protection.

Furthermore, governments should not forget conventional methods of border security. Hardening of borders in light of credible terrorist activity and the use of ground patrolling is likely to not only provide a human dimension to any wider security matrix, but will also act as a very visible deterrent in its own right.

In cases such as Lebanon, where strategic depth cannot be achieved geographically, conventional border security measures are not just useful, but essential.

However, as with Lebanon, Türkiye and Tunisia there are examples of how technology and contemporary means have driven new border security measures, in the face of evolving terrorist threats. The ability to harness data, particularly in more contested environments where threat levels are higher, will ultimately feed the hardware needed to provide more comprehensive layers of security. Additionally, having a solid defence industry as a base, coupled with a culture that promotes interaction between military, law enforcement and the private sector is key to staying ahead of technological shifts.

In terms of countering terrorism, smart borders are likely to be crucial in the fight to maintain sovereignty of borders and protect those that live within them. However, governments need to balance conventional methods with contemporary means in order to maximise their ability to both proactively deter threats, but also react to terrorist attacks.

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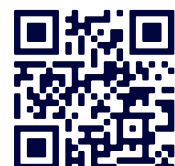**Augmenting border security & defense with Radio Frequency (RF) sensor technology**

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Three arrested in Spain following migrant deaths at sea

Officers from the Guardia Civil, working together with Europol and the US Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), seized 21 drums of liquid and solid chemicals used to extract and process cocaine after discovering the laboratory near Madrid.

The operation, which included searches of 27 properties in the provinces of Pontevedra, A Coruña and Madrid, also led to the seizure of EUR 3 million in cash. An additional EUR 10 million worth of assets were seized, such as luxurious houses, vehicles and recreational vessels.

Spanish Civil Guard (Guardia Civil) arrested 20 suspects after dismantling a cocaine laboratory capable of producing 100 kilograms of the drug each month. A number of those arrested were considered by law enforcement as High Value Targets for their involvement in multiple drug trafficking cases.

The individuals arrested are suspected of having imported tonnes of cocaine and coca leaves from South America to Spain using recreational vessels. They are believed to have chartered sailboats and catamarans from Galicia to South America to transport their illicit cargo into Europe.

Two criminal organisations smuggling Chinese nationals taken down

Europol has supported the Spanish National Police (Policía Nacional) in dismantling two criminal organisations that smuggled hundreds of Chinese nationals using a variety of fraudulent methods. According to the Spanish authorities, the criminal networks smuggled over 1 000 victims, most of whom were later sexually exploited. These rings are alleged to have earned EUR 5 million from their criminal activities.

Such a complex investigation had to be conducted in two phases: in the first, Spanish law enforcement authorities arrested 35 suspects for belonging to a criminal organisation, facilitating illegal immigration and forging documents. Following these arrests, the Spanish police arrested 34 more suspects for allegedly issuing fraudulent documentation to facilitate the legalisation of the migrants.

16 arrests as Vietnamese network smuggling migrants across the English Channel busted

A joint operation involving law enforcement authorities from France and the United Kingdom, supported by Europol, led to the dismantling of a Vietnamese criminal network smuggling migrants across the English Channel. The network was also involved in sexual and labour exploitation and money laundering.

The criminal network smuggled migrants from Poland and Germany through France to the United Kingdom. The main organiser - the right hand of the leader of the criminal network - organised the smuggling activities,

while another their accomplice was in charge of collecting the money and organising migrant convoys. Most of the migrants had illegally entered the EU through the use of fraudulently obtained working visas. Some of the irregular migrants were smuggling methamphetamine to the region of Paris, supplying Asian drug trafficking groups based in the area in return for a reduced price for their journey.

Urgent cooperation needed to fight money laundering and terrorist financing

Countries need to urgently step up their efforts to target the huge illicit profits generated by transnational organized crime that facilitate conflicts, fund terrorism, and negatively impact vulnerable populations.

This was the unprecedented call to action from the heads of the FATF, INTERPOL and UNODC in Vienna, at a high-level Side Event on the first day of the 33rd Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice.

By focussing on the proceeds of crime and the illicit

financial networks behind them, Member States can more effectively combat and disrupt organized crime networks and enhance the effectiveness of crime prevention efforts.

Disincentivizing criminal activity through targeting illicit profits would also positively impact across all Goals of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, such as inclusive economic growth, financial stability, and strengthened institutions and governance.

INTERPOL network renews commitment to protecting victims from global crime threats

To address the increasing logistical, operational and technological sophistication of transnational organized crime, INTERPOL's Heads of NCB conference has ended with delegates approving a series of conclusions to boost the law enforcement response.

Expanding access to I-24/7, INTERPOL's secure global police communications network, to specialized law enforcement units and border control points, and sharing more criminal data via the Organization's 19 databases were highlighted as key.

Increased use of INTERPOL's policing capabilities, such as the Global Rapid Intervention of Payments (I-GRIP) stop-payment mechanism to intercept the proceeds of cyber-enabled financial fraud was also endorsed.

Since the launch of I-GRIP in 2022, the Organization has helped member countries intercept more than USD 500 million in criminal proceeds.

To better protect vulnerable members of society, NCBs were also encouraged to make greater use of INTERPOL's International Child Sex Exploitation (ICSE) database to share intelligence, identify offenders and safeguard victims, as well as Green Notices to warn about sexual predators.

INTERPOL detects 200 stolen vehicles from Canada each week

More than 1,500 vehicles stolen in Canada have been detected around the world since the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) successfully integrated the Canadian Police Information Centre's (CPIC) stolen vehicle information with INTERPOL's Stolen Motor Vehicle (SMV) Database in February 2024.

The RCMP's CPIC database contains details on approximately 150,000 vehicles stolen in Canada. Since the integration, more than 200 of the stolen vehicles have been identified each week as their

information is checked by law enforcement around the world, usually at national ports of entry.

INTERPOL's Stolen Motor Vehicle (SMV) database connects 137 countries and holds data on 12 million vehicles worldwide.

Collaborative efforts and private sector role in combating human trafficking and labour exploitation

More than 50 public officials, business and civil society representatives gathered in Sofia to discuss collaborative efforts in addressing human trafficking for the purpose of labour exploitation.

The meeting addressed the critical role of the private sector in overcoming these challenges and presented policy and legal developments in human rights due diligence. It also facilitated the exchange of best practices and lessons learned for identifying and mitigating human trafficking and labour exploitation risks in supply chains.

Trafficking for the purpose of labour exploitation may occur in all sectors of the economy, at different stages of businesses' supply chains, and as a consequence of public procurement practices. Combating this form of trafficking requires co-ordinated action between states, businesses, non-governmental organizations and trade unions as well as the support of free media.

Eastern European Informal Working Group on Passenger Data meets in Albania

This was the first meeting hosted by the country chairing the Group and it gathered more than 100 passenger data experts, both in person and online, from Eastern Europe, South-Eastern Europe, South Caucasus, Central Asia and beyond.

The EEIWG is a part of the UNOCT Countering Terrorist Travel Programme global initiative. Its objective is to

support States in building their capabilities to detect and counter the movement of terrorists and serious criminals by collecting and using Advance Passenger Information (API) and enhancing information exchange, in accordance with Security Council resolutions 2178 (2014), 2396 (2017), and 2482 (2019), international standards and relevant privacy laws.

Ukrainian law enforcers receive equipment from OSCE to better combat illicit trafficking in weapons, ammunition and explosives

The OSCE supports Ukraine in addressing the problem of illicit trafficking in weapons, ammunition and explosives by providing specialized vehicles and equipment to its law enforcement authorities.

At the official donation ceremony in Kyiv, the OSCE delivered an assistance package of more than 1.9 million EUR value, which included off-road vehicles, automobiles for service dog transportation, disruptors and specialized toolkits for the safe removal of explosive ordnance, as well as ICT equipment with analytical software. The equipment was distributed among the expert departments of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the National Police, the State Border Guard Service and

the State Customs Service according to their mandates in responding to the risks and threats posed by illicit firearms and explosives, in particular the attempts of cross-border smuggling.

"We must not underestimate the risks of smuggling, that is why we are developing our operational capabilities in arms control, including with the OSCE support," said Kateryna Pavlichenko, Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs.

OSCE
Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

IOM Hosted International Dialogue on Migration in New York Focusing on Facilitating Regular Pathways

For two days, Member States, migrants, the UN system, various international organizations, civil society, youth leaders, private sector, academia and other key stakeholders explored innovative, evidence-based policy solutions for regular pathways for migration.

"Migration has shaped our past and holds the key to our future. The evidence is overwhelming that when migration is managed well, it can drive true sustainable development around the world," said IOM Director General Amy Pope. "By facilitating safe and regular pathways for migration, we can enable opportunities for migrants, better protect their rights, and contribute to greater prosperity in the countries migrants come from and those that host them."

Underpinning the discussion was awareness of the critical need to leverage migration as a force for prosperity and progress for all, including the most vulnerable, in a world grappling with intersecting crises of rising conflicts, violence and disasters, all exacerbated by climate change. More and better opportunities for people to move in a regular and beneficial way were recognized as essential to unlocking migration as an opportunity for a better future.

24 Migrants Dead in New Shipwreck off Djibouti Coast; Second Deadly Incident in Two Weeks

At least 24 migrants have died and 20 others are missing after a boat they were travelling in capsized off the coast of Djibouti. A boat carrying at least 77 migrants, including children, departed from Ras al-Ara off Yemen's coast. It capsized near the coastal town of Obock.

Thirty-three migrants who were aboard survived

the accident and are currently receiving medical care, food, shelter, and psychosocial support at the International Organization for Migration's (IOM) Migrant Response Centre in Obock. Local authorities are conducting search and rescue operations in the hope of finding more survivors. The accident follows a similar tragedy in the same area reported two weeks ago where at least 38 migrants perished.

## IOM Calls for Increased Support for Growing Number of Stranded Migrants in Yemen

Amidst the ongoing regional conflicts and socio-economic instability, the IOM underscores the need for urgent funding to support its Voluntary Humanitarian Return (VHR) programme in Yemen, which plays a pivotal role in facilitating the safe and voluntary humanitarian return of migrants to their countries of origin.

Ahead of the Sixth Senior Officials Meeting on 7 May in Brussels, the United Nations, international NGOs and Yemeni Civil Society Organisations urgently appeal for sustained support for the 18.2 million people in need in Yemen.

The funding situation for VHR remains exceedingly challenging, with resources being exhausted in the first quarter of 2024 due to the overwhelming demand for assistance. Despite the successful voluntary humanitarian return of close to 6,600 migrants in 2023 and 2,300 earlier this year from Aden and Sana, additional funding is urgently needed to address the escalating needs of stranded migrants in Ma'rib and beyond.

INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION FOR MIGRATION

IOM·OIM

THE UNITED NATIONS MIGRATION AGENCY

EU external borders: Irregular border crossings down 23% in January-April
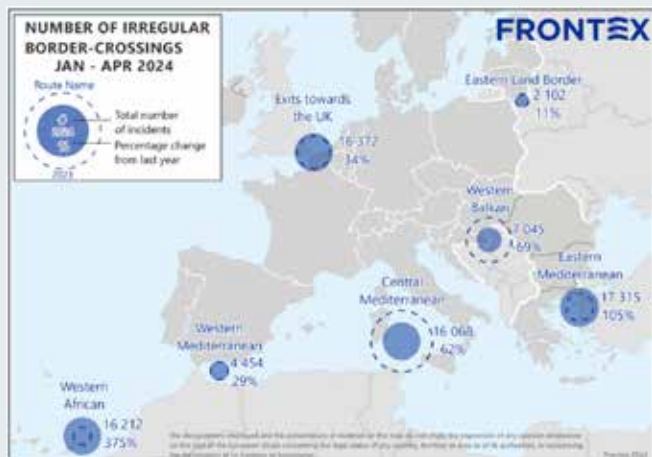
The number of irregular border crossings into the European Union in the first four months of 2024 fell by nearly a quarter (23%) to around 63,400, according to preliminary data. The Western Balkans and Central Mediterranean saw the biggest drops in detections of irregular crossings among the major migratory routes (-69% and -62%, respectively), while the Western African and Eastern Mediterranean routes experienced the highest increases (+375% and +105%).

The Central Mediterranean route, which saw the largest number of irregular crossings in 2023, continued to show a downward trend from recent months, with a year-on-year drop of 62% to slightly above 16,000. In April, the number of arrivals stood at nearly 4,600, down nearly 70% from a year ago.

Also in line with the recent downward trend, the number of detections on the Western Balkan route in the January-April period fell by more than two-thirds (-69%) to just over 7000.

Frontex and the new Pact on Migration and Asylum

The Pact on Migration and Asylum is a set of new rules managing migration and establishing a common asylum system at EU level. Frontex will play a multidimensional role in its implementation. Approved by a vote of the European Parliament on 10 April 2024 and formally adopted by the Council of the EU on 14 May 2024, the Pact will ensure that the Union has strong and secure external borders, that people's rights are guaranteed, and that no EU country is left alone when under pressure. It will also allow for a better support to frontline Member States in case of migratory influx, cross-border crime, or destabilisation attempts by those non-EU countries that attempt to instrumentalise migration.

The new Pact amends and builds on the previous reform proposals in the area of migration and tries to strike a balance between firmness and fairness. Considering the specific needs expressed by the Member States, solidarity was put at the core of the Pact. It offers a comprehensive approach on migration, asylum, border management and integration, but it also provides EU countries with the required flexibility to address the pressing challenges they face and the necessary safeguards to protect people in need.

Peer-to-peer study visit on return and referral mechanisms

the Post-Return Unit of the Returns Division and representatives of Egyptian national entities participated in a peer-to-peer study visit to Yerevan, Armenia. This visit was aimed to support the Egyptian authorities in the development of a national return, reintegration and referral mechanism, as well as to gain knowledge of Armenian best practices regarding post arrival and reintegration assistance. The event was organised within the framework of the Technical Assistance Projects for Third Countries on Return, Readmission and Reintegration.

The visit served as an excellent opportunity for the exchange of best practices involved in the national referral mechanisms, and how Frontex can further support non-EU countries in the field of returns and reintegration.

The future of training for border guards

Frontex has brought together the European and national training experts, EU agencies and industry to start shaping the future of training technologies in a rich and interactive debate. A conference taking place on 28-29 February in Kraków, Poland, constitutes a big leap towards a more innovative training methodologies for the borders.

The vision

Frontex has organised a conference on innovative industry solutions to support the training of law enforcement officers today by assessing and evaluating the potential needs of tomorrow. The Kraków Congress Centre attracted over 200 participants, including EU agencies, researchers and representatives from industry, all keen on developing new technologies that will help avoid the future risks and threats at the EU's external borders.

Hans Leijtens, the Executive Director of Frontex, welcomed the participants and outlined the objectives of the conference: "We are organising this conference because we need to understand how we can use new technologies to better train our border guards, and especially because Frontex will employ 10,000 new border guards by 2027. We also see beyond our Agency. This event is a unique opportunity for Member States to learn about the modern training technologies and see how they can use them for their own training at national level".

The subject matter

The main goal of the conference was to demonstrate innovative industry solutions that can support the training of law enforcement officers. During the two-day event, researchers presented advanced training concepts and technologies that can be practically applied to supporting training activities in the European Border and Coast Guard context. The exhibition area hosted around 50 industry representatives demonstrating the latest achievements,

such as virtual and augmented reality sets, video training content production, wearable devices, and AI solutions for more real-life training situations.

The participants could follow six panels covering various aspects of future training technologies:

1. Technology-driven opportunities for training innovations;

2. The trainer's challenges and needs for the future – to focus on the future role of the trainers;

3. Focus on the main actors of the training process in leveraging technologies – to put the spotlight on the needs of a learner;

4. The neuroplasticity of learners' brain – to deal with memorisation techniques and absorption of knowledge;

5. Gaming in learning.

A peak into the future

Many researchers, entrepreneurs and academics from the major European institutions, border police and the European Commission agreed that the future will be guided and dominated by the increasing capabilities of the virtual and augmented reality. The AI potential in creating realistic training conditions should be observed and developed with the awareness of its own risks and impact on human mind. Given the fact that the borders and their management are essential elements of migration management, well trained border guards are key to respond to this challenge.

"We are involving all interested parties in this conference, as we all have a share in shaping the future. Member States can use the ideas from today's debates and presentations to train their national crews. Also, we will keep them informed about the Frontex study on these emerging technologies for border management training, which is now being conducted in order to establish the Border and Coast Guard Academy," announced Frontex Executive Director Hans Leijtens.

BLIND MULES

By Lina Kolesnikova, Security Consultant

Last January in her new film Trafficked: Underworlds with Mariana van Zeller (National Geographic UK) the investigative journalist Mariana van Zeller attracted public attention to how international criminal syndicates are targeting elderly people and turning them into becoming drug mules.

The film tells the story of Rodney Baldus, a 70-year-old American, who is serving his 17-year sentence in Mozambique for drugs trafficking. Initially approached by an online phishing message that promised a $10.5 million inheritance from a distant Italian relative, Baldus was sceptical and reluctant to engage in any activities. However, the money presented an opportunity being out of his then financial distress, so when he was offered a free air-ticket to Mozambique and a prepaid hotel accommodation there to finalize the paperwork, he went for it. The anonymous benefactor, who told him he had this mysterious inheritance, said he must travel first to Maputo (capital of Mozambique), and then to South Africa where he would take a flight to Italy.

At the hotel in Maputo, a man paid him a visit and gave him a suitcase to carry to Italy. Baldus was also given a box of biscuits in which more than 4 kg of heroin was hidden.

Later he said he did not suspect he was duped for carrying drugs. It seems he was set up as a blind mule to smuggle heroin into Italy via the infamous Southern Route which starts in Afghanistan, wends its way through Africa and ends in different European destinations.

Rodney Baldus was arrested in Mozambique and imprisoned there. His daughter tries to campaign to attract attention for his defence and other elderly people who were used by mafia as blind mules.

Who are (Blind) Mules?

Initially, the term blind mule refers to an individual who unknowingly engages in smuggling drugs across the border. However, this term started being used for cases of smuggling people, arms, money, CBRNe, counterfeit goods, antiques and artworks etc.

The term blind mule is opposed to mule – an individual who knows about his/her mission and possible consequences. However, mules are not necessarily involved in smuggling by their own rational choice. They could be forced into doing it by a threat (or blackmail), by poor economic conditions (for example, poverty often resulting in depression), by human compassion (sometimes involved in case of people smuggling), by setting up to misunderstand or misinterpret the real situation (making them to believe in friendship, love, or solidarity) etc.

With a growing number of smuggling cases employing sea-, land- and air

transport we can constate that cargo companies, not only individuals, could also be used as blind mules by criminal groups. Meanwhile, this article limits itself to looking at individuals set up, engaged and used by organised criminal groups in their interests as blind mules.

Modus operandi

Blind mules could be chosen on the spot (randomly), or they could be selected and targeted by criminals prior to contact and engagement.

One of the most frequent cases is when the vehicle (air, land and maritime) of unaware person or company is chosen as means of smuggling due to its itinerary. The to-be-smuggled objects are hidden at the bottom of vehicles or in other parts where access is not easy. That works for smaller objects that could be packages of drugs, or arms. In the case of people smuggling, "fellow travellers" could hide in a car or in a truck.

Secondly, the smuggling items could be placed into personal luggage either by direct request

or secretly from those who will carry them. That could be possible before travelling (blind mule could be asked about a favour of taking the "object" or the object could be placed without permission) but also during the travelling by plane, train (for example, before passing customs control or ad-hoc, in case of previously unexpected but probably police check), or a cross-border bus.

Another way of using a blind mule could be asking for "an assistance" of unaware person at the airport/ railway station. Blind mule could be asked to help with carrying some items (bottle of water or bottle with baby formula or anything else looking innocent), which could hide smuggling objects during the customs check or in case of police check.

Blind mule scam scenario is becoming a real problem now as it is very difficult to identify, control and stop it. The contact and engagement scenarios vary. Among the more frequent scenarios initiating the mule (involving advance "preparation"

and setting up the scene), are fishing scam, fake job ads and new contacts in dating apps. A target is contacted online by a scammer who builds trust, presents a convincing story, and then creates a tempting bait (more often this is love, money or some career opportunities). Next, they announce some unforeseen problem that puts the desired outcome in jeopardy. Being guided by a requestor, the target develops the feeling of anxiousness, and is willing to make an extra step to still get to the expected outcome. The target is then sent to a third, potentially unexpected location, and asked to transport luggage as a favour.

Blind mule scams often affect the elderly and women because they are less likely to arouse suspicion at border crossings, checkpoints and traffic stops. It is also easier to manipulate elder people as they might be less aware of risks associated with online contacts.

Let us look structurally at smuggling and blind mules to see if we can identify certain countermeasures.

Economy of smuggling

When smuggling something or someone, there are several economical aspects to consider:

- Revenue side

o Usually shared between

  - Owner of the "object" to smuggle, the seller.

  - The one who organises the logistics, i.e., the smuggler.

o On the costs side, there are

  - The one who executes the smuggling actions, i.e., the mule.

  - Transportation costs, i.e., vehicle and associated costs (insurance if applicable, fuel, etc.), or travel tickets and associated hotel and daily expenses for a mule, etc.

  - Eventually, bribes or other "close your eyes" facilitating expenses.

In this scenario, the cost of a mule can be significant, as a smuggling

operation would rarely involve one single person. The mule acting knowingly, would want to be paid for the work, but also for the risk. Moreover, the mule might also demand some sort of "professional insurance", for those who get caught as well as their families. Finally, running a knowing mule always comes with a risk that, in some circumstances, might give authorities information on the operation, or decide to play their own game; the latter is both a risk and, potentially, a higher cost for the smuggler.

The runners of the smuggling scheme constantly look at evaluating and optimising the costs (and risks).

Blind mules reduce costs, for example, by avoiding the costs of "insurance" and blind mules cannot reveal much useful information to the authorities if caught, because they have none. Hence, blind mules for smuggling might be cheaper and less risky than paying a regular knowledgeable mule. Of course, much depends also on the scale, for example, how much of the "product" needs to be smuggled.

Risk management

Apart from revenue and costs, smugglers would consider different risk factors. For example, the risk of a mule being apprehended by the police. Access to reliable mules might be wide but still limited, as one more person knowing of the scheme would augment the risk to the secrecy of the whole scheme and to a potential network detection in case of an individual mule being caught.

This is quite different with the blind mule, who cannot say anything beyond typically very limited and largely faked information about the individual the blind mule was in contact with. Secondly, with the large population of aged tourists travelling or willing to travel, the number and the choice of blind mules might be significant.

By dividing the delivery lot into multiple smaller packages carried by blind mules (in particular, in case of drugs and smaller objects smuggling), smugglers may manage the risk of the whole shipment by reducing the cost of a single failure. That comes together with reducing the risk of being detected, as the blind mule would simply know nothing of the actual nature of the operation, or its real scale.

What can be done about it?

When we talk about smuggling by blind mule we always talk about "something", an object to be smuggled. This something can be passed in three ways: in a vehicle, in hold luggage and hand luggage.

For the luggage (for example, with air travel), there is nothing special to do. All the usual controls that are done on any luggage without specific attention to the owner – scanning, sniffing, etc. This can be covered by the regular industrial control systems, like those controlling luggage in the distribution systems at airports.

For the hand luggage, this is something else. Apart from the general equipment and technics

aiming at scanning, sniffing, etc., the phenomenon of blind mules can also be addressed by pushing on its strong-weak link - the blind mule himself/herself.

As the mule is "blind" and is innocently clueless about the true origin and nature of the smuggling operation, the mule would have fewer reasons to hide the information. The blind mule operation has several components which need to be identified:

- Actual travel details. From where to where the flights are and when the flights are taken. The blind mule operation is not usually a regular tourist trip (even though it might become so when stakes are higher, and smugglers decide to spend more on the mule). It means that the mule could inform on their activities during the trip, such as meeting some previously un-met people. This, often, involves a journey via "another" destination

for no obvious economic or travel time benefit. The blind mule, if questioned, could be open about this happening, and it result in their awakening to the reality of their situation.

- Secondly, the security guards, during routine questioning aim at identifying potential twists in travel and "things" that do not belong to the travelling passenger.

So, in principle, we can find generally available measures to uncover the possibility of someone being used as a blind mule. The tough task, however, remains identifying who needs further questioning. In a mass travel industry, slowing down the security checkout is costly for airport operations.

In fact, similar services and solutions aiming at detecting a potentially illicit operation exist. If you think of telecom or financial services, such detection solutions are well

developed, as well as the methods of manual and automated "creation" and "testing" of the detection rules. In modern societies full of surveillance and information collecting of all kinds about people, by multiple services and providers, it is a matter of political will and hopefully, privacy-aware information gathering and "connecting the dots" methods, coupled with enriching data from existing data operators. Would such techniques be applied, it is of no doubt that over time, detection of "blind mule" operations might improve, at least enough to deter mass operations. Would the privacy be still there? Depending on how detection services are set, it is possible that the privacy situation would not really change for the worse.

In the meantime, more attention should be paid to the awareness campaign in media, for example, national TV channels with prime-time social advertising, for as long as we talk about elderly people who might be watching TV more often comparing to younger people), poster and announcements at airports, as well as other methods and channels. The meaning of a campaign could be preventing ("don't take anything from anyone") as well as detective, as enticing travellers to hint security guards on something they might be carrying while setting legislative measures to protect such travellers for cases, when ultimately, such hinting would result in an actual detection of something illicit.

Almost 1 400 firearms removed from circulation in 16 European countries

A total of 1,388 firearms were seized during an operation led by Romania and coordinated by Europol, spanning across 16 European countries. After months of intelligence gathering to identify key targets, an action took place in February, the details of which could only be made public now due to operational reasons.

During the action week, hundreds of law enforcement officers carried out more than 630 house searches and 107 arrests. Nearly 500 converted - or ready to

be converted - firearms were recovered during the operation, together with almost 900 firearms. Other weapons, such as air guns or rifles designed to fire metal pellets, were also recovered, along with over 60 000 rounds of ammunition.

While 3D-printed weapons are often reported on, law enforcement authorities estimate that converted gas-alarm and signal firearms account for close to half of the illicit weapons in circulation within the EU.

Individuals and organised criminal networks often use this type of firearms, as certain models remain easy to modify to discharge live ammunition and convert into lethal weapons.

Once they enter the EU, they are usually bought for an affordable price from legitimate marketplaces. The weapons would then be converted and resold in other countries where obtaining, importing, and possessing a handgun requires a license.

UNODC launches new action to combat human trafficking and migrant smuggling

Human trafficking and migrant smuggling are multi-billion-dollar businesses that have changed dramatically in recent years, driven by global challenges such as war, large migration and refugee flows, cybercrime, climate change and the COVID-19 pandemic.

Against this backdrop, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) is launching a global Action against Human Trafficking and Migrant Smuggling.

"Over the past two decades, there was relative optimism that we could win the fight against trafficking and smuggling globally," said Ilias Chatzis, Chief of the UNODC Human Trafficking and Migrant Smuggling Section. "Then things changed drastically. Progress achieved is today under threat."

The involvement of organized crime and the rapid evolution of digital technologies have exacerbated the situation. Online technologies are regularly abused to exploit trafficking victims or advertise migrant smuggling services.

Financial crises, armed conflicts and forced displacement, catalysed by the pandemic, have strained justice systems, significantly reducing investigations, prosecutions, victim identification and protection. In 2020 alone, the number of detected victims worldwide fell by 11 per cent compared to the previous year.

Under its new Action, UNODC will highlight the links between trafficking and smuggling and other forms of organized crime such as cybercrime, money laundering, drug trafficking, firearms trafficking, and corruption.

New network to target migrant smugglers in the digital domain

Experts from law enforcement, prosecution, judiciary, the EU and international organisations gathered at Europol headquarters to discuss the digital aspect of migrant smuggling, the first of a series of meetings as a follow-up to the Global Alliance to Counter Migrant Smuggling launched in November.

The discussions focussed on prevention, response, international cooperation and how to work with the private sector to tackle migrant smuggling activities enabled by the use of online platforms. The objective of the meeting was to identify the most suitable operational responses to this increasing threat, at both EU and global levels.

An effective response to tackle migrant smuggling in the digital domain

The criminal market for migrant smuggling activities has continued to grow, alongside existing and new crises worldwide. At the same time, it has become apparent that while offering 'safe trips' online, migrant smugglers are ruthless in their lack of regard for the lives and safety of migrants. Their lack of respect for human life has resulted in a number of tragic deadly incidents while transporting migrants during both sea crossings and on land. Migrant smugglers have quickly adjusted their modus operandi to profit from the opportunities offered by digital technologies to advertise and organise their illegal services and operations.

Tackling migrant smuggling in the digital space presents significant challenges for law enforcement and judicial authorities. Migrant smugglers have identified readily accessible digital tools often free of charge, the use of which facilitates their illegal operations. This toolbox used by smugglers is composed of online platforms, including social media applications, encrypted communications and cryptocurrencies.

Digitalisation enhances all aspects of this type of crime, such as the recruitment, advertisement and coordination of smuggling activities, as well as the laundering of illegal profits, and enables criminal actors to organise their illegal activities under law enforcement's radar. Criminal actors are quick to take advantage of the opportunities provided by the online environment, encrypted communication solutions and easily accessible digital tools. Taking advantage of these opportunities offered by the digital world allows criminal organisations to become more efficient, agile and resilient against law enforcement intervention.

The experts also discussed the challenges they encounter in criminal investigations and shared knowledge and best practice. The participants identified common needs to tackle more effectively the challenges posed by the online component of migrant smuggling activities.

Europol's Deputy Director Operations, Jean-Philippe Lecouffe said, "As technologies evolve and criminals adapt their business models, we need to stay one step ahead and continue to develop our policy and legislative frameworks, setting the right scene to tackle digital migrant smuggling activities more effectively. Increasing our technical capabilities, creating informal networks of experts and building effective cooperation with the private sector are crucial to combat migrants smuggling networks and prevent them from putting migrants' lives migrants at risk."
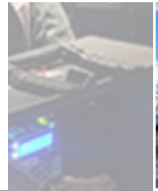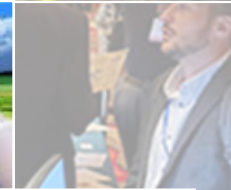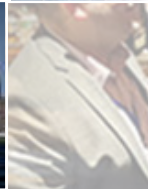
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AGENCY NEWS AND UPDATES

Crime group sentenced for shipping crystal meth to Australia

Three people who sent crystal meth to Australia, where it would have been worth up to £4.3 million at street level, have been jailed.

Yvonne Stewart, Kevin Filkins and Robert Hamilton from the UK, were convicted for their roles in a drug trafficking operation in January 2023 following an investigation by the Organised Crime Partnership (OCP) – a joint National Crime Agency and Metropolitan Police Service unit.

After 24 kilograms of crystal meth (methamphetamine) was seized in Australia, the country's Border Force and the Australian Federal Police established that the shipment had come from the UK.

OCP investigators discovered that the drugs had been sent from Croydon on 25 June 2021, with CCTV images identifying Stewart, who was working in the cargo sector at the time. The images also captured a man, subsequently identified as Filkins, sending a shipment labelled 'two glass Buddhas' to New South Wales, Australia..

Iran To Implement Over 40 Plans To Organise Migrants

Abdullah Mobini, the head of Iran's National Migration Organisation, announced the implementation of over 40 plans to "organise migrants" in Iran.

These initiatives include the registration and deportation of undocumented migrants, tightening border controls, reforming visa issuance, and regulating the employment of foreign nationals.

The Islamic Republic News Agency (IRNA) reported that these plans would be implemented concurrently. Mobini stated, "With optimal integrated management, we can organise foreign nationals in accordance with the policies of the Council for Policy and Coordination of Foreign Nationals and Migrants."

According to Iranian authorities, 1.3 million undocumented migrants were deported from the country last year..

ABF shines light on 'catfish' deception to import illicit drugs

Four foreigners were detained as a ABF officers in Perth examined an air cargo consignment from India, which consisted of 100 boxes split over six pallets, and was described as 'adhesive tape'.

During the examination, officers located and removed white powder which was concealed within 159 rolls of tape.

The powder returned a presumptive positive result for pseudoephedrine – a border-controlled drug, which is a precursor for the manufacture of methamphetamine.

In total, officers located and seized 10kg of pseudoephedrine, which has an estimated potential street value of more than $400,000.

CBP Continues to Intercept Counterfeit Designer Clothing, Shoes, Purses and Watches

U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officers at the Rochester Port of Entry seized various designer items throughout the month of May for bearing counterfeit trademarks, including multiple high-priced watches.

CBP officers inspected several shipments that contained multiple pieces of "designer" clothing, shoes, handbags, and watches. One high-end watch discovered had a value of approximately $1.2 million dollars. After a thorough examination of the merchandise, all the items were determined to be inauthentic and were seized for bearing counterfeit trademarks. Had these items been genuine, the total Manufacturer Suggested Retail Price (MSRP) value of the shipments would have a be approximately $1.6 million dollars.

"Our CBP officers and Import Specialists continue to protect the consumer from these fake products," said Rochester Port Director Ronald Menz. "Using experience and training, they work hard to intercept these items that defraud the consumer and legitimate business."

ERO Boston arrests fugitive wanted by Brazilian authorities for drug trafficking, robbery charges

Enforcement and Removal Operations (ERO) Boston apprehended a Brazilian national wanted by authorities in his home country for charges of drug trafficking and robbery by intimidation or violence. Deportation officers arrested the 32-year-old Brazilian fugitive during a vehicle stop.

"This Brazilian fugitive attempted to flee justice in his home county and hide out in Massachusetts," said ERO Boston Field Office Director Todd M. Lyons. "He represents a significant threat to the residents of our neighborhoods."

A Brazilian court convicted the Brazilian noncitizen of two counts of two counts of drug trafficking and one count of robbery by intimidation/violence in 2017. The court sentenced him to a total of 17 years and six months in prison for the three convictions. A Brazilian court issued an arrest warrant for the Brazilian fugitive Nov. 25, 2022.

U.S. Border Patrol arrested him after he and his family unlawfully entered the United States near Lukeville, Arizona..

Multi-agency exercise tackles piracy, illicit maritime activities in Kenya

Kenyan authorities have completed a multi-agency exercise aimed at boosting maritime security capabilities and coordination to combat illicit activities at sea – the first of its kind in the country.

The exercise USALAMA BAHARINI '24 was jointly organized by EUNAVFOR ATALANTA, the International Maritime Organization (IMO) and the State Department for Shipping and Maritime Affairs of the Republic of Kenya.

Conducted in Mombasa, Kenya, the initiative is part of the European Union's support for the Jeddah Amendment to the Djibouti Code of Conduct (DCoC-JA).

The DCoC-JA is a regional initiative to combat piracy, armed robbery against ships and other illicit maritime activities in the Western Indian Ocean and the Gulf of Aden. It builds on the Djibouti Code of Conduct (DCoC), which was first adopted under the auspices of IMO in 2009 to tackle piracy and armed robbery against ships.

42 arrested for smuggling migrants across the Danube

A cross-border investigation led by the Romanian Border Police (Poliția de Frontieră), supported by Europol and involving the Bulgarian General Directorate Combating Organised Crime (Главна Дирекция Борба с организираната престъпност) and the German Police (Bundespolizeiinspektion Waidhaus), has resulted in the dismantling of an organised crime group involved in migrant smuggling. The group were smuggling migrants from Bulgaria to Romania, across the Danube river, and then toward Western Europe.

The investigative activities established that the criminal network, composed mainly of Bangladeshi, Iraqi and Romanian citizens, was formed in the beginning of 2023. The suspects recruited migrants from Middle-East who wanted to reach Western European countries, especially Germany.

In the first phase, the suspects picked migrants up from Bulgaria and transported them in boats across the Danube river. The migrants would then be taken in groups of 20-30 via cargo transport to the western part of Romania, mainly the areas of Timișoara/Arad and Caraș Severin

Bulgarian customs officers at Lesovo BCP found cigarettes in a truck with furniture

The customs officers at Lesovo BCP found 80 000 pieces (4000 boxes) of contraband cigarettes in a truck transporting furniture to France.

The truck with a foreign registration arrived at Lesovo BCP on an inbound route into the country. The driver, a Turkish citizen, submitted documents that he was transporting furniture from Turkey to France via Bulgaria. During the customs inspection with specialized X-ray equipment, the inspectors mark a suspicious area in the cargo. A physical inspection was carried out, during which undeclared 80 000 pieces (4000 boxes) of cigarettes of various brands were found hidden among the declared furniture in the marked area. The contraband cigarettes were seized. Against the driver with initials I.D. an administrative violation act was drawn up.

Since the beginning of February alone, the customs officers of the Lesovo BCP have discovered 67 attempts to smuggle cigarettes, and a total of 339 900 cigarettes (16 995 boxes) have been seized.

Major blow to Albanian drug trafficking network: 59 arrests across Europe

Italian and Albanian authorities have taken decisive action against a major drug trafficking network operating from both countries. With the support of Eurojust and Europol in a large-scale operation, 59 suspects were arrested, including in Albania, Italy, Germany and the United Kingdom, and 10 suspects were subjected to other precautionary measures in Italy. The network mainly smuggled heroin, cocaine, hashish and marijuana into Germany and Spain using cars with double bottoms or secret compartments.

Last year, 21 suspects were arrested in a first operation against the same Albanian-led organised crime group (OCG). That operation also led to the seizure of drugs worth an estimated EUR 2.7 million.

15 arrested in intercontinental crackdown against Nigerian crime syndicates

Europol coordinated a massive international operation targeting Nigerian criminal networks active in the EU and abroad. 16 partners from four continents joined forces to fight poly-criminal

Nigerian criminal networks responsible for a multitude of serious crimes.

This unprecedented international operation, supported by EMPACT, was conducted by law enforcement from across Europe, Africa, South America and North America. 468 law enforcement officers took part in the action day. The crackdown targeted Nigerian criminals responsible for crimes such as the smuggling and distribution of drugs, trafficking in human beings for sexual exploitation, fraud, illegal waste smuggling, and money laundering.

BOC NAIA seizes Php 4.5M worth of kush

In its continued efforts to strengthen the anti-illegal drug campaign, the Bureau of Customs-Ninoy Aquino International Airport (BOC-NAIA), in collaboration with the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) and the NAIA Inter-Agency Drug Interdiction Task Group (NAIA-IADITG), seized a parcel containing 323 grams of kush, a high-grade marijuana, with an estimated street value of Php 4,524,800 at the Central Mail Exchange Center (CMEC) in Pasay City.

Upon profiling and examination of shipments, the parcel, which was

misdeclared as "gift," was found to contain high-grade marijuana from Toronto, Canada, and consigned to an individual in Quezon City. Field testing conducted by the Customs Anti-Illegal Drug Task Force (CAIDTF) and PDEA confirmed the substance as kush marijuana.

French Authorities Seize 406kg of Cocaine in the Bay of Biscay

A significant narcotics operation conducted led to the seizure of 406 kg of cocaine in the Bay of Biscay. The operation, led by the French authorities, saw the French Customs Patrol Vessel KERMORVAN, based in Brest, intercept a sailing vessel named LE DAHU, flying the Polish flag.

The French National Directorate of Customs Intelligence and Investigations (DNRED) initiated the detection of the vessel in the Caribbean and tracked it into the Bay of Biscay, in collaboration with OFAST, the US Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA), UK's National Crime Agency (NCA) and the Spanish National Police, with coordination through MAOC (N).

The two crew members of LE DAHU, after attempting to destroy the vessel and its cargo by setting it on fire, were rescued by the KERMORVAN crew.

The drugs, found in 19 bales aboard the vessel, were handed over to OFAST under the authority of the Public Prosecutor at the Brest Judicial Court, supported by the Atlantic Maritime Gendarmerie Group.

Border Force bolster security measures in general aviation space

Pilots, owners and operators of private aircraft will now be liable for fines of up to £10,000 if they do not provide Border Force with advance passenger information online before they depart to or from the UK, under new regulations to strengthen border security.

The new regulations – which were laid in Parliament at the end of November 2023 and came into force on 6 April - will mean that Border Force and the police can better identify potential security threats, prevent and detect crime, and monitor immigration status. Previously, advance passenger information could be submitted by email, fax or other manual methods.

They will also ensure that Border Force can prevent people they have security concerns about from travelling to the UK, and that they can deploy resources more effectively. Where notified of a general aviation flight, Border Force clears 100% of flights either in person or remotely, in line with standard protocols.

INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS TO FILLING-IN THE SHIPS, PORTS AND MARITIME INFRASTRUCTURES UNDERWATER SECURITY CAPABILITY GAPS: "UNDERSEC" EU FUNDED PROJECT

By Captain Ioannis Androulakis / MANIBUS OOD (UnderSec Project partner) Managing Director

Maritime security, including the underwater, is of paramount importance, to assure the smooth and safe transportation of goods and people to/ from ports, as well as to preserve uninterrupted operations of critical coastal-based/ river-based/ offshore maritime infrastructures. Maritime security refers to a multidimensional operational environment, as security threats may derive from literally everywhere. Although a lot of effort has been put and numerous systems have been developed and support the above the sea surface operations, very few have been implemented for the underwater.

To that end, and taking into consideration the complexity and

harshness of the underwater environment, the development of a sophisticated/ innovative system to support maritime operators underwater security operations is essential.

Driven from experience and the security occurrences of the past, mostly those related to terrorists' acts, the international community (UN, IMO, EU, etc.) put the issue on top priority in its agenda and established a robust legal and regulatory framework (Fig. 1) for States', Organisations', and individual Actors' compliance.

According to this framework, the continuous security risk assessment, by subject matter experts, is a fundamental requirement. New/ emerging security threats and their trends, in close relation to the identified ships and ports vulnerabilities, must be always taken into consideration. Ship Security Plans (SSP) and Port Facilities Security Plans (PFSP) should always be updated accordingly. However, as Nicolo Machiavelli said in his Prince, "Humans, by nature, have the flaw to be complacent in good weather and not prepare themselves for the storm", and as such, the underestimation of the underwater threats results to security capabilities gaps.

Hence, a new/updated security risk assessment is necessary and it may include the following assessed underwater threats: Illicit/ dangerous acts (terrorist acts and sabotage,
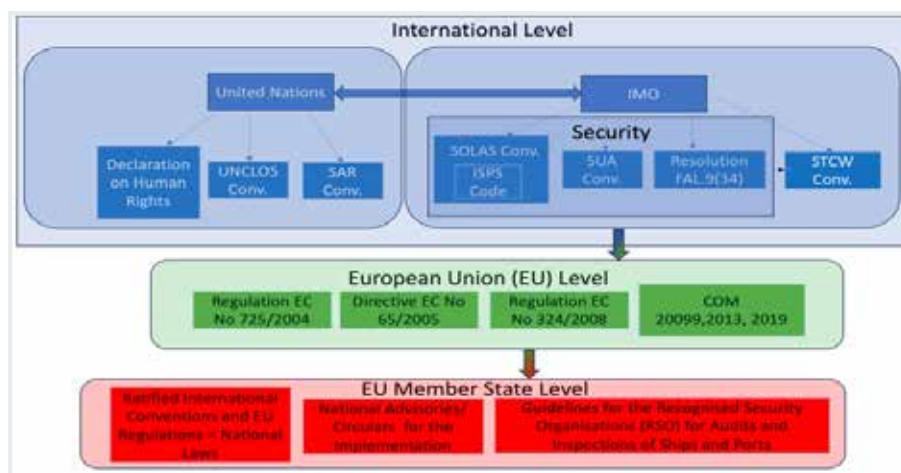

Figure 1: The legal and regulatory framework

including mining, with the intention of multiple casualties' or significant disruptions' effects, smuggling of illegal goods and substances, unauthorised access to ships and ports, with considered illegal/ malevolent intentions), criminal actors like terrorists, saboteurs, smugglers and their instruments (humans (diver intruders), manned and unmanned underwater vehicles (UV), ships/ boats intentionally or unintentionally carrying illicit and/ or dangerous goods/ objects, transforming the ship into a "mule" or a "weapon", towed (underwater) objects by a ship/boat, strapped/ attached object to ship's hull, hidden object in/behind ship's hull (i.e. water inlets, rudder trunk, propeller shaft etc.)), illicit and dangerous goods/ objects (drugs, chemicals, biological agents, radiological/ radioactive material, nuclear material, explosives (mines ,dirty bombs, IEDs)). These threats must be examined against own ship and port vulnerabilities, which may

include the following: Restricted access areas/ spots, waterside adjacent areas, facilities entrances and entrance routes, operations terminals, critical assets mooring areas, security response assets mooring areas, attractive ships to malevolent acts and their mooring areas, and many more depending on the facility.

The implementation of fundamental security functions like "Prevent", "Detect", "Respond", and "Remedy", to control security risks and respond to breaches of security and security occurrences, is necessary, for ships, ports and critical maritime infrastructures safety and integrity assurance. However, some Security Practitioners' Capabilities Gaps (to implement their Mission effectively) have been identified and need to be filled-in accordingly. These Capabilities Gaps derive from the DOTMLPF factor structure analysis (Fig. 2, 3). This analysis highlights that, in many cases, there
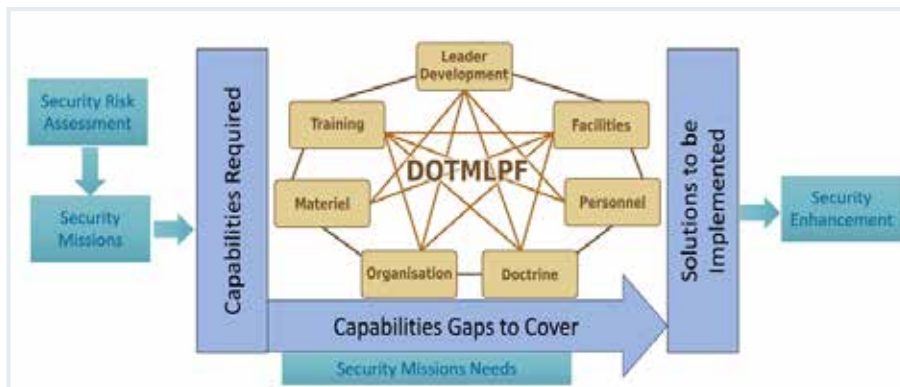
Figure 2: The Capability Gaps Identification (DOTMLPF Analysis)

is a serious underestimation of the underwater security threats and this is the most important reason for the consequent Gaps identified in Doctrine, Organisational structure, Training of personnel, Material and technologies employed, Leadership's drives, orientation and education, Personnel's adequacy, quality and suitability, and Facilities structure, to be ready to prevent, detect, respond and remedy breaches of security and security occurrences related to the underwater threats.

The solution: an innovative ships, ports and critical maritime infrastructures Underwater Security System and its security domains.

European Commission requires the research and development of innovative security solutions, to help out crews and security personnel to fill-in these security capability gaps. UnderSec project is a HORIZON EUROPE R&D funded project (https://undersec-project.

eu/) (https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/101121288) aligned to this direction.

The multinational and interdisciplinary UnderSec project team, consisting of experts in the maritime security and underwater security domain, research/academic institutions, technology providers, auditing and inspections organisations, end-users from the Coast Guard, Borders Control, and Port Authorities sectors, will develop a modular, holistic approach, integrated, interoperable, and cyber-secure Prototype System, to enhance underwater security operations of ships, ports and maritime infrastructures.

The UnderSec system will incorporate multimodal sensors (i.e. optical (visual and LiDAR), EM, acoustic (i.e. high frequency Sonars, Side Scan Sonars and Forward Looking Sonars), and Gamma-Ray Spectrometers), fixed

and/ or integrated onboard robotic assets (i.e. Autonomous Surface Vehicle (ASV), Light Autonomous Underwater Vehicle (LAUV) and Remotely Operated Underwater Vehicles (ROV)), assisted by multimodal AI, ML, DL and Digital Twins techniques. The system will integrate Security Risk Assessment and Crisis Classification SW engines and services, for ships', ports' and maritime infrastructures' Underwater Security Situational Awareness and Decision-Making Support, Common Operational Picture generation and distribution to all interested stakeholders, along with relevant Command/ Control/ Communication/ Response/ Reporting capabilities.

UnderSec system as a whole will be tested and evaluated during real-life Pilot Use Case (PUC) demonstrations in real operational environments. The expected results are the establishment of new knowledge, innovative and beyond the current State-of-the-Art solutions, advanced processes for the enhancement of underwater security operations and the consequent regulatory framework upgrade suggestions.

The UnderSec system security domains are the following:

Security intelligence information exploitation: Manual inputs from Users regarding existing intelligence, ports security level 1, 2 or 3 and

relevant system's sensors and assets readiness and alertness level.

Situational awareness: Continuous 24/7underwater security surveillance against potential intruders divers, hostile underwater vehicles and illicit/ dangerous containers towed by ships, on-demand ships' hulls scanning/ inspection, for the best possible detection/ recognition/ classification of strapped, attached, hidden or misplaced illicit (i.e. narcotics) and dangerous (i.e. CRNE) material, underwater inspections of ports' entrances, seabed and docking places foundation, for the best possible detection/ recognition/ classification of dangerous containers (i.e. CRNE packages, IEDs and/or dirty bombs) at these places, alarming and representation on a map of what/ where/when, tracking of threats, incidents' evolvement updates in real-time.

Decision-making support / suggestion for action: Suggestions on security personnel emergency response actions, according to SSP, PFSP and SOPs, for security breaches and security incidents escalation prevention, response to security incidents, deterrence and suppression of security threats, actions to remedy situations, as well as security personnel accountability monitoring.

Emergency response and contingency plans and check lists implementation support: Preventive actions support,

Figure 3: The Security Practitioners Capability Gaps Identification

deterrent and response measures implementation, against perceived and recognized threats, in order to prevent or respond to illicit acts and avoid undesired escalation of security incidents, as well as the retrieval, capturing and manipulation of previously recognised/ classified dangerous objects, without the involvement of divers.

Communication and reporting support: Real time cross-communication and situational awareness updates to all interested parties, regarding essential information for situation escalation and progress updates throughout the timeline. Formal reporting processes' implementation support with relevant suggestions at the local tactical level and external with the Company and the Authorities at the operational level, according to Policies and SOPs.

Records keeping and protection of evidences: Collection, recording, maintenance, preservation of security incidents' data and protection of evidences (such as video footages, audio records, chronological data closely aligned with and cross-referenced against information from the vessel's or organization's legacy systems, for future needs of incidents' investigation, root cause analysis, corrective/ preventive actions, lessons learnt and training processes.

UnderSec system's added value will be the filling-in of the identified users Capabilities Gaps and the overall underwater security operations enhancement (Fig. 4).

Individual technologies will be tested, compared with each other and pre-evaluated in a controlled testing and experimentation

Figure 4: The UnderSec system security domains and added value

environment, while the modular components and the UnderSec system as a whole will be tested and evaluated during real-life Pilot Use Case (PUC) scenarios in real operational environments in a two phased demonstrations series by the end of the project (on summer 2026). The expected results are the establishment of new knowledge in the underwater security domain, innovative and beyond the current State-of-the-Art solutions, advanced processes for the enhancement of underwater security operations and the consequent regulatory framework upgrade suggestions, as well as an UnderSec, modular or system as a whole, solution uptake plan for commercial exploitation in an optimum cost/benefit approach.

As the security threats are growing bigger in quantity and severity, criminals utilize more sophisticated tools and implement unprecedented modus operandi, exploiting the underwater domain to remain undetected and have the advantage of surprise, innovative ships, ports and maritime infrastructures underwater security systems, providing for situational awareness, early warning and alarming, deterrent and response/ remedy capabilities, decision-making support and evidences protection, will be more and more required.

Partnership to Counter Indian Ocean Drug Trafficking

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime Global Maritime Crime Programme (UNODC GMCP) brought together eleven littoral states and international partners at the annual Southern Route Partnership Meeting in Dar es Salaam with the aim of enhancing coordination and cooperation in countering drug trafficking in the Indian Ocean.

Due to the challenges posed in the surveillance of vast maritime areas in the Indian Ocean where illicit narcotics are trafficked, UNODC GMCP convened in the Southern Route Partnership (SRP) under the Indian Ocean Forum on Maritime Crime (IOFMC). SRP was created in 2016 and serves as an interactive space that encourages members of national drug enforcement agencies, donors, international organizations, and partner agencies from Indian Ocean States to enhance international coordination, collaboration, and cooperation in countering drug trafficking on the Southern Route.

Heroin and methamphetamine produced in the Afghanistan is trafficked through three main routes: the Northern Route, the Balkan Route and the Southern Route, which includes a lengthy maritime component through the Indian Ocean. World events in recent years have contributed to an increase in use of the Southern Route.

'The Covid period taught us that drugs are being trafficked more by sea than by air', said Dinatsingh Mungla from Mauritius Revenue Authority Customs.

Nicolas Flury, Deputy Director of the Regional Maritime Information Fusion Centre, added to this, commenting that 'The war in Ukraine showed us that more and more drug transport is being done by sea than by road, and after Covid it has stayed the same'.

Insightful discussion took place with the attendance of the Japanese Ambassador and the Head of Delegation of the European Union in Tanzania. International partners including Combined Maritime Forces, US Naval Criminal Investigative Service and UK National Crime Agency and regional partners, such as the Trilateral Planning Cell, Regional Maritime Information Fusion Centre and the Regional Coordination of Operations Centre, contributed with their expertise and experience.

'Maritime crimes do not respect borders', as per the Head of the EU Delegation to Tanzania, Ambassador Christine Grau, therefore maritime law enforcement and anti-narcotics agencies must collaborate across borders and work together at a regional and global level.

Further Information: UNODC GMCP in partnership with the United Republic of Tanzania, the Republic of Mozambique and the Republic of South Africa and with the financial support of the US Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement established the Trilateral Planning Cell in Maputo. This cell has members of the three countries with the aim to counter the influx of heroin in Mozambique, South Africa and Tanzania by working closely together.

OUR IDENTITY IS A LEGAL KEY THAT OPENS DOORS

Interview with Marc-Julian Siewert, CEO of Veridos

How is the concept of proof of identity changing in an increasingly digital world, especially in relation to travel?

For several years now, we have seen a clear trend towards the virtualization of government documents. For more and more people around the world, mobile devices have become the go-to solution for almost everything, from banking and insurance to shopping, travel and managing personal information. People increasingly expect to store and use important documents on these devices. So the direction of travel is set - one day we will be able to access all our ID documents completely digitally. Yet although we are still at the beginning of this journey, digital versions are already well established as a supplement to physical documents, serving as an optional proof of identity alongside traditional ID cards. The fact, that there's not yet a complete replacement is mainly due to the lack of interoperability and standards that the necessary IT infrastructure must guarantee. For example, German police can do

little with a digital American driver's license. But security is also an issue, as the ID card on the smartphone must be at least as tamper-proof and well-protected as its physical counterpart.

These developments will take time, but progress is being made. Travelers will increasingly see the benefits. For example, when they no longer need all the required documents in physical form at the airport gate and can just use their smartphone instead. In some cases, self-check-in terminals are already making air travel more convenient. In conjunction with travelers' biometric data, they are reducing the number of points of contact with human staff and thus significantly lower waiting times.

What are the challenges of new technologies and solutions in the area of border control for travelers?

Border control is always a balancing act between security and convenience. On the one hand, in an increasingly interconnected world, we are faced with a growing number of travelers, which poses a logistical challenge in areas with limited space, such as airports. Automation and advanced technologies are needed for efficient processing of the growing number of passengers in a small area. On the other hand, security must be ensured. If you want to know who is entering the country and when, you need technological solutions that can identify large numbers of travelers in a short period of time.

The trade-off between security

and an easy, convenient travel experience is at times made against the backdrop of privacy, which goes hand in hand with regulatory requirements. Finding the best solution for all parties involved is certainly one of the major challenges in the area of border control. There already are many innovative approaches, such as biometric corridors, which use biometrics to identify and verify pre-registered travelers as they pass through. The e-gates and self-check-in terminals in use today are milestones on the road to the secure and convenient travel experience of the future. Ultimately, however, it all depends on how people accept new technologies.

What challenges do you see on the road to widespread acceptance and use of digital identity solutions, and how can they be overcome?

When we talk about adoption of new technologies, we always talk about fundamental trust. This doesn't happen overnight, but rather

over time – similar to areas such as online banking or authorization procedures using facial scans or fingerprints. These solutions are commonplace today because they are considered secure and proven. Digital identity solutions will follow a similar route because they provide real value to users and make their lives easier. The technologies are also constantly evolving, simplifying processes and making them easier to use.

However, trust in new approaches such as an all-digital ID card is not a given. The onus is on vendors and governments to deliver secure and mature solutions. We are well on our way.

What is the Self-Sovereign Identity (SSI) concept and how will it impact the identity solutions of the future?

Self-sovereign identity puts individual users back in control of their own data. With SSI, people can decide what information they want to share, when, and with whom. Unlike
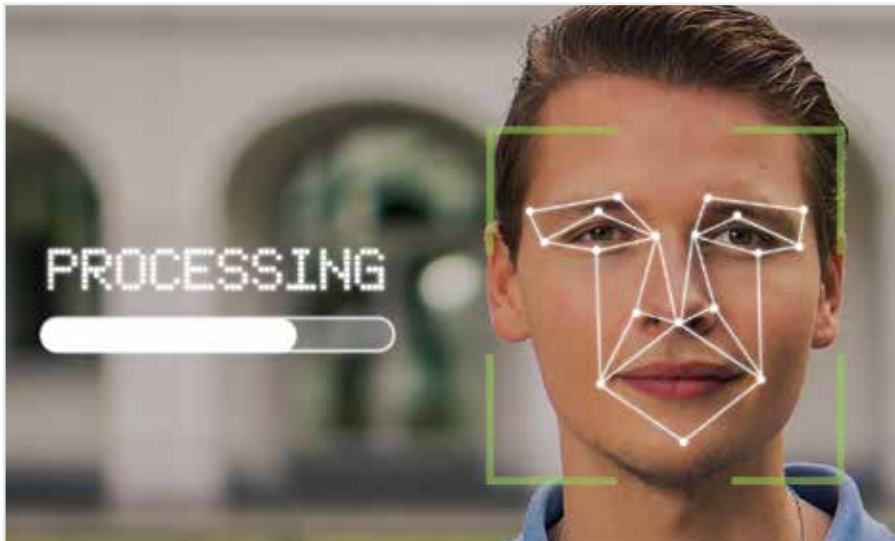
traditional identity credentials, such as an ID card, which expose a lot of sensitive data, the solution enables selective release of individual pieces of information that are needed for a specific application. This zero-knowledge proofing approach enables citizens to effectively protect themselves against data misuse and data mining. They retain control over their personal data while proving their identity in a secure and verifiable manner.

SSI also offers significant benefits at the digital level, such as identification in the Internet of Things. For example, drivers can identify themselves at e-charging stations without active intervention on their part. A self-determined identity not only ensures privacy, but also convenient and secure authentication in an increasingly connected world.

How do you see the connection between digital identity solutions and the strengthening of human rights and the democratization of government processes?

Our identity is a legal key that not only opens doors to important government services, but also ensures our participation in society. Without valid proof of identity, people cannot vote in elections or access services such as education or banking. The issues of human rights and equality are therefore closely linked to ensuring everyone has a legally valid identity and can identify themselves. This is also the stated goal of the United Nations – by 2030, everyone should have the means to register their identity. With the growth of e-government services and offerings, the focus on digital identities will increase.

Sustainability is an important issue in many industries, especially in travel and tourism. How have identity solutions adapted to this issue and what progress has been made?

Veridos, for example, has not only initiated the transformation of all internal processes to become sustainable, but also intensified its research into sustainable ID documents to reduce its own carbon

footprint and replace plastic-based passports with environmentally friendly, recyclable alternatives. The key is to use recycled polycarbonate or polycarbonate derived from natural sources such as corn or sugar cane. What may seem like a drop in the bucket is actually a huge gain for the environment – after all, all the ePassports that expire in just one year are equivalent to the distance from Paris to Zurich when lined up side by side. We see enormous potential here that we can exploit with our sustainable processes. Digitizing the documents will also help reduce the high demand for physical ePassports in the long term and save resources.

Justice Department Expands Efforts to Dismantle Human Smuggling Operations and Support Immigration Prosecutions

Ahead of the third anniversary of the establishment of Joint Task Force Alpha (JTFA), the Justice Department announced additional efforts to dismantle human smuggling operations and increase accountability for those who violate immigration laws. Launched in June 2021 by Secretary of Homeland Security Alejandro N. Mayorkas and Attorney General Merrick B. Garland, JTFA represents a partnership between the Justice Department and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) with a mandate to disrupt and dismantle human smuggling and trafficking organizations operating in and through Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, and Mexico. To build on the success of JTFA, including an increase of more than 25% in defendants charged with alien smuggling since 2020, the Justice Department is realigning resources, providing financial incentives, and proposing increased penalties for human smuggling offenses.

The Justice Department also is coordinating with border U.S. Attorneys and their districts, as well as with the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and other law enforcement agencies, to evaluate current needs and resource allocations, and to identify available and potentially new opportunities to address immigration issues.

Prioritizing Prosecutions Involving Smugglers

The Justice Department will continue to prioritize the prosecution of cases involving human smuggling, working through JTFA — which is led by the Criminal Division's Human Rights and Special Prosecutions Section — and the efforts of individual U.S. Attorneys' Offices and their law enforcement partners.

Felony prosecutions for smuggling have been on an upward trajectory, increasing by 27% since 2020. These cases are significant. -They include human smuggling of both vulnerable populations and individuals who pose security concerns, as well as unlawful transportation of assets and contraband, high-speed flight from law enforcement and possession of firearms by smuggling defendants. Focusing on felony smuggling prosecutions creates a deterrent effect, not only impacting the defendant

but creating a ripple effect that discourages future smuggling. Additional smuggling prosecutions will target known routes utilized and controlled by cartels and other organized criminal groups.

JTFA will continue to focus on the highest-level human smugglers — the worst of the worst. Since its creation in June 2021, JTFA has achieved significant tangible results, including:

- Over 300 arrests, including of leaders, organizers, and significant facilitators;

- Over 240 U.S. convictions;

- Over 170 U.S. defendants sentenced, with significant sentences of 30 years or more in prison;

- Substantial seizures and forfeiture of assets and contraband including millions of dollars in cash, real property, vehicles, firearms and ammunition, and drugs; and

- Multiple indictments and successful extradition requests against foreign leadership targets located in Guatemala, Mexico, and Honduras.

Recently, the leader of a migrant smuggling organization was sentenced to 10 years in prison for her role in smuggling over 100 migrants from Honduras to the United States for profit.

Using Financial Rewards to Dismantle the Leadership of Transnational Human Smuggling Networks

The Justice Department and Department of State are launching an Anti-Smuggling Rewards (ASR) Initiative designed to dismantle the leadership of human smuggling organizations that bring migrants through Central America and across the southern U.S. border. The ASR Initiative will use existing statutory authority — through the State Department's Transnational Organized Crime Rewards Program — to offer financial rewards for information leading to the identification, location, arrest, or conviction of those most responsible for significant human smuggling activities in the region.

UNODC and EU working together against migrant smuggling

Migrant smuggling is a booming criminal enterprise, but several obstacles prevent countries from tackling it effectively.

These include the enormous scale and transnational nature of the crime, the lack of criminalization in many countries and the substantial illicit profits behind it.

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the European Union (EU) have been working together to combat migrant smuggling for 15 years. During this time, they have implemented numerous initiatives that aim to address some of the most pressing challenges associated with this crime.

One of UNODC's flagship projects in this area is the EU-funded Global Action against Trafficking in Persons and the Smuggling of Migrants (GLO.ACT). Since 2015, the initiative has been helping its partner countries respond to migrant smuggling in an innovative, demand-driven, and targeted way.

The staggering scale of migrant smuggling

Migrant smuggling is estimated to be worth 5.5 to 7 billion USD globally, equivalent to the gross domestic product (GDP) of the Maldives or Montenegro.

UNODC has recently documented how this crime is becoming increasingly complex and intertwined with other forms of organized crime, such as corruption, money laundering, as well as human, arms or drug trafficking.

From 2022 to 2023 alone, smugglers transported around 223,000 migrants across the Central Mediterranean Sea – one of the largest and deadliest smuggling routes stretching from North Africa to Italy. This represents an alarming 60 per cent increase compared to the previous year.

Migrant smuggling is no longer a localized issue between countries sharing borders. Migrants sometimes spend years trying to reach their destination in a distant country, making it that much more challenging to detect, investigate and prosecute smugglers.

Not considered a crime

Despite its overwhelming magnitude, smuggling is not yet criminalized in some parts of the world. This leads to several problems, including the difficulty in effective investigation and prosecution, both domestically and across borders.

The lack of an effective legal and policy framework against migrant smuggling also promotes impunity for the criminals involved, who are then further emboldened in their acts.

"We need to keep improving our responses and partnerships to disrupt and dismantle agile criminal networks and go after their profits," said Ghada Waly, UNODC Executive Director.

Recent tragedies in various parts of the globe show that smugglers have no qualms about sending overcrowded, dilapidated boats out to sea or locking up people in suffocating containers for days on end. And they often evade accountability if the migrants do not reach their destination alive.

In fact, 2023 was the deadliest year on record for migrants and refugees, with more than 8,000 people dying along migration routes globally – a 20 per cent increase from the previous year.

Besides accidents and disasters, UNODC has extensively documented how smugglers subject migrants to physical violence, extortion, gender-based violence and forced labour.

Smugglers' services do not come cheap. Criminals charge up to 6,000 EUR for a single Mediterranean crossing from North Africa to Europe. A trip from South Asia to North America can cost anywhere from a few hundred US dollars to as much as 55,000 USD.

For some highly organized gangs, smuggling is only one crime among many other criminal activities. Despite the tremendous profits made by smugglers, financial investigations into their activities are almost non-existent.

A recent UNODC study, prepared in cooperation with the EU, showed that money from smuggling is often laundered, used to fuel corruption or spent on lavish lifestyles.

A shining example of international cooperation

"This transnational threat requires joint and concerted action, and I am proud to say that the EU has been a steadfast partner against migrant smuggling, from political engagement and policy exchange to investing in important technical cooperation programmes," said Waly.

"Our cooperation with UNODC is excellent," said Mr. Carl Hallergård, Ambassador of the European Union to the United Nations in Vienna.

Last November, the European Commission launched a Call to Action for a Global Alliance to Counter Migrant Smuggling and highlighted its partnership with UNODC in this work on bilateral and multilateral levels.

"This is a step in the right direction – addressing and countering the smuggling of migrants requires a coordinated and multi-stakeholder approach," added Hallergård.

"Pakistan is one of the countries to which UNODC and the EU have provided support through GLO.ACT," said

Waly. "We have worked closely with the government to provide training on intelligence-led investigations. Notably, our support enabled a successful conviction relating to the 2023 boat tragedy, in which more than 300 Pakistani migrants lost their lives off the coast of Greece."

"The assistance provided by GLO.ACT has enhanced our capacity to prevent and address migrant smuggling, safeguarding the rights and dignity of vulnerable people," said Abdul Khalique Shaikh, Inspector General of Police Balokistan in Pakistan.

The joint anti-smuggling work of UNODC and the EU was discussed at a special event, "Celebrating EU-UNODC Partnership in Addressing Migrant Smuggling through a Whole-Of-Route Approach", in the margins of the 33rd session of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (CCPCJ) in Vienna, Austria.

"The joint efforts across various fronts, from capacity building for criminal justice professionals to assisting victims, underscore the comprehensive approach needed to address this heinous crime effectively," said Ambassador Naela Gabr, Chairperson of the Egyptian National Coordinating Committee for Combating and Preventing Illegal Migration and Trafficking in Persons, who attended the event.

## 75.9 Million People Living in Internal Displacement in 2023: IDMC Report

An unprecedented 75.9 million individuals were living in internal displacement at the end of 2023, according to the latest Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) report. Nearly 47 million new internal displacements, or movements, were registered in the same year, highlighting the urgency to protect internally displaced people and prevent future displacements.

"As the planet grapples with conflicts and disasters, the staggering numbers of 47 million new internal displacements tells a harrowing tale," said the International Organization for Migration (IOM) Deputy Director General Ugochi Daniels. "This report is a stark reminder of the urgent and coordinated need to expand disaster risk reduction, support peacebuilding, ensure the protection of human rights and whenever possible, prevent the displacement before it happens."

The Global Report on Internal Displacement (GRID) shows that conflict and violence triggered 20.5 million displacements. Of these, Sudan accounted for almost 30 per cent, while the Gaza strip accounting for 17 per cent – 3.4 million – in the last three months of the year.
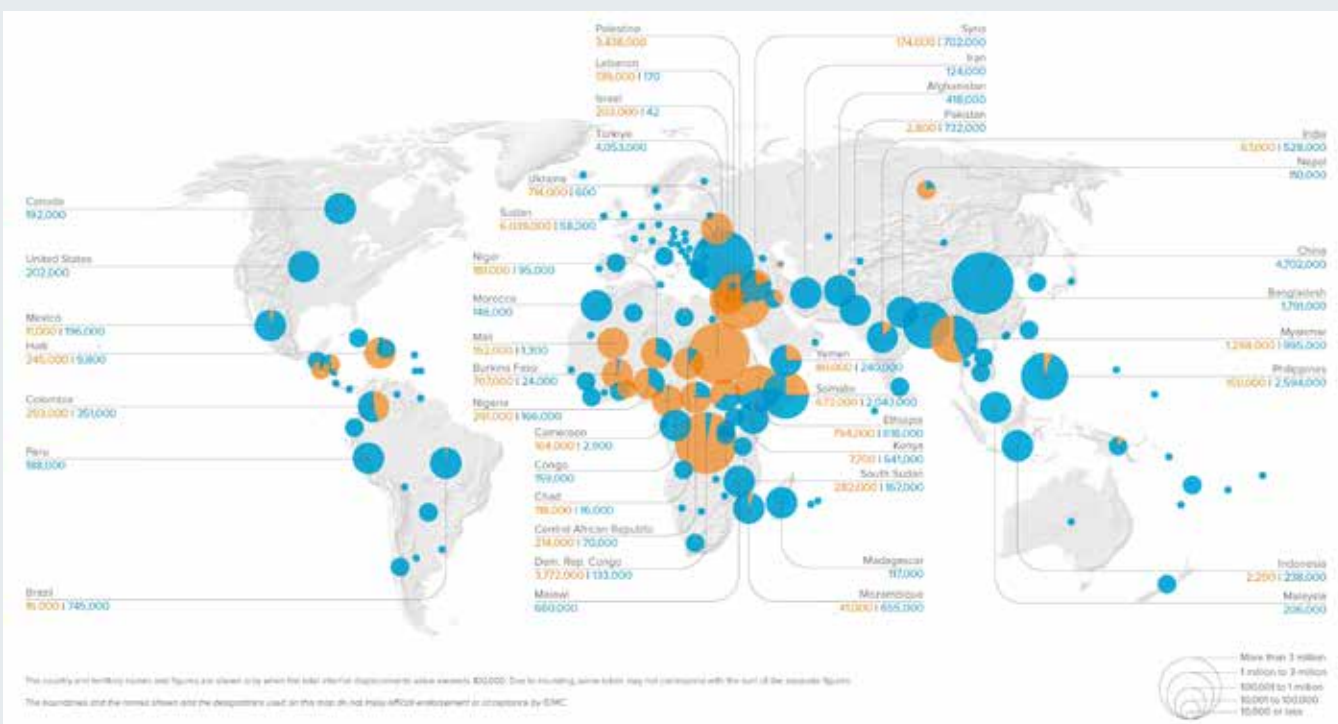
There were 46.9 million internal displacements, or movements, recorded during 2023, across 151 countries and territories. All but three of the 45 countries and territories that reported conflict displacement last year also reported disaster displacement. The 148 countries and territories reporting disaster displacement include high-income countries such as Canada and New Zealand which reported their highest figures ever.
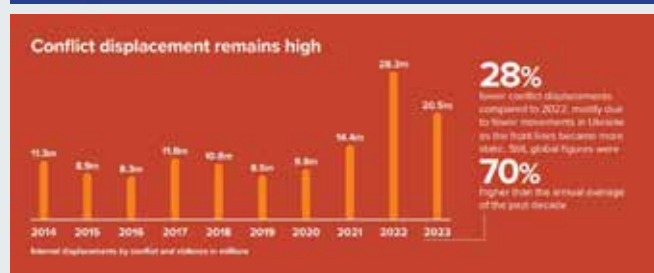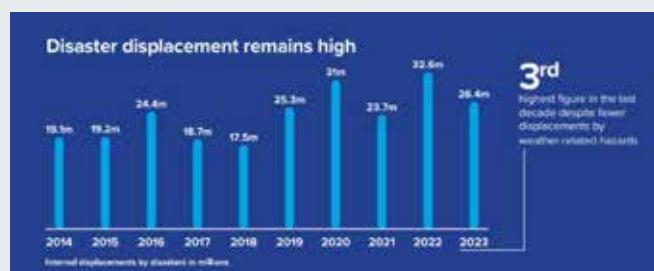
Disasters continue to displace millions of people every year. In 2023, disasters such as cyclone Freddy in south-eastern Africa, earthquakes in Türkiye and Syria, and cyclone Mocha in the Indian Ocean led to 26.4 million movements, accounting for 56 per cent of the total new internal displacements. Remarkably, there

was a rise in disaster-induced displacements in high-income nations, exemplified by Canada, where an unprecedented wildfire season led to 185,000 internal displacements.

In the years to come, the number of people displaced by disasters is expected to rise as the frequency, duration, and intensity of natural hazards worsen in the context of climate change we are seeing such tragedies occurring in the last weeks in Brazil and in Kenya.

Despite these daunting challenges, knowledge gaps remain, and the international community needs better data to understand, prevent, manage and address internal displacement in conflict and disaster contexts.

The report is an invaluable tool for humanitarian and development partners, governments, and a range of diverse stakeholder groups as they work to resolve existent displacements and prepare for future displacements.

Unlocking the Fight against Financial Crimes: UNODC Empowers Tanzanian Law Enforcement Agencies to Counter Money Laundering and Terrorism Financing

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) recently concluded a training workshop for newly recruited law enforcement officers from the United Republic of Tanzania. The workshop aimed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the pervasive nature of money laundering activities in Tanzania Mainland and Zanzibar, which are linked to predicate offenses and serious organized crimes, such as terrorist financing, corruption, and human trafficking, and pose a significant threat to the stability and development of the regions. The training reinforced the capacity of law enforcement officers in conducting financial investigations to ensure that criminals do not benefit from crime.

UNODC, through its Global Programme against Money Laundering, synergizes with the Government of Canada to provide bilateral support to member states in Eastern Africa upon request. This support is tailored to augment the capacity of their respective law enforcement agencies to tackle financial crime. In response to the requests

from Tanzania's Financial Intelligence Units (FIU), the UNODC organized a week-long training workshop in Arusha, Tanzania. The workshop's primary objective was to enhance financial investigators' capacity using inter-agency collaboration to effectively combat the proceeds of these illicit acts. The workshop emphasized the importance of utilizing this methodology as a standard and additional tool to address serious and organized crimes, including money laundering and the financing of terrorism. The training sessions presented a valuable opportunity to identify additional areas where assistance was needed and laid the groundwork for future bilateral or regional law enforcement cooperation and capacity building.

The workshop consisted of officers from selected law enforcement agencies (LEAs) in Tanzania, including the Tanzanian Police Force (TPF), the Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU), the Anti-Corruption Authorities, the Revenue Authorities, and the Economic Crimes Centre (ECC).

Sponsored by: **⑴⑴ CRFS**

REAL-TIME I/Q DATA CAPTURE FOR ENHANCED INTELLIGENCE

How a national force secured its borders with reliable spectrum data by CRFS, an RF technology specialist for defense, national security agencies and systems integration partners CRFS provide advanced capabilities for real-time spectrum monitoring, situational awareness, and electronic warfare support to help customers understand and exploit the electromagnetic environment. www.crfs.com

SITUATION:

Hostile Neighbor and Land Border Crossing

A national border force monitoring a potentially hostile border rife with people smuggling relied on dated and limited equipment—not good news for national security.

The force needed to modernize its capability to undertake spectrum monitoring. It needed to capture I/Q data for intelligence purposes. And, to add to the intelligence picture,

it wanted to carry out TDoA to accurately determine the location of a source, even a mobile one moving quickly – beneficial for signals intelligence (SIGINT) and electronic warfare (EW).

The force had previously used CRFS' equipment and recognized its excellent capabilities. So, it contacted the RF spectrum monitoring specialists with a unique request – a product that did not exist.

SOLUTION:

A Bespoke I/Q Recorder for Enhanced Intelligence

The border force needed a bespoke solution. It was impressed with the capabilities of the RFeye Sens Portable and the RFeye Node 100-18 and wanted the best of both.

CRFS co-engineered new equipment to solve a specific need. Partnering with the end-user, CRFS' technical team developed a solution to meticulously fit the application – which proved to be far more capable than the existing off-the-shelf solution.

That solution was named the RFeye SenS Remote. The equipment developed had a frequency range of up to 18 GHz – allowing the border force extensive signal coverage. Able to operate anywhere within this band, the user can detect a vast range of signals – from standard communications signals, up to radar signals and even some satellite communications. The user has the full flexibility to use the RFeye SenS Remote for COMINT or ELINT applications.

But the solution did not end there. Together with its new hardware, the border force required an adapted software solution to maximize its use of the RFeye SenS Remote.

Software engineers adjusted RFeye DeepView so the end-user could enter the data it collected into third-party software to decode and demodulate signals – further increasing their intelligence acquisition. This was only possible because RFeye DeepView uses open non-proprietary formats.

RESULTS:

Spectrum Data-Derived Intelligence to Boost Security and EW Operations

By building full I/Q capability with the RFeye SenS Remote, the border force now has a more secure border.

After full training on how to use the hardware and software, the force is now capturing and identifying signals of interest and carrying out spectrum monitoring, situational awareness, and EW support.

The customer can reliably capture communication signals and radar signals, which are analyzed, put into detection systems, and, ultimately, passed on to tactical units.

The delivery and operation of the RFeye SenS Remote have been so effective that the national border force is planning to expand its TDoA network across its extensive and potentially hostile borders using RFeye Nodes 100-18 in both fixed and tactical and mobile deployment CRFS options.

2024 WORLD BORDER SECURITY CONGRESS:

WHERE EAST MEETS WEST

Closing remarks of the 2024 World Border Security Congress in Istanbul, Turkey, by John Donlon QPM, Conference Chairman.

We have had a great 2024 World Border Security Congress (WBSC) and before we all head off home or to see the wonderful sights of Istanbul, I just wanted to close the conference with a few comments.

Events such as these provide a fantastic networking opportunity and I, personally, always go away having learned something new and worthwhile and I do hope you have found the last few days to have been educational, enjoyable and of real value.

We have had some excellent presentations by some very distinguished, experienced and professional people and a number of enlightening discussions around a full range of border management matters. You, our esteemed audience, made the content of those discussions lively, entertaining and challenging and that in itself has added to the whole experience during this week.

We have been extremely fortunate to have had active support from a number of international organisations and we are most grateful to our:

• Official Sponsors
• Our Exhibitors – and of course
• All of our Speakers.

Alongside this we have had attendees from almost 70 countries with over 400 delegates registered for the conference. So, a significant global event seeking to understand and address the border challenges that affect us all and highlighting the need for continuing efforts in developing cooperation, coordination and communication.

We were delighted to welcome a set of international speakers for our keynote session. We started with our guest from Brazil, the 5th largest country in the world. Then we moved to our presenter from Bangladesh, the 8th largest country and concluded with a speaker who had travelled all the way from Samoa, which is ranked at 188th on the global listings.

All three keynote speakers provided similar messages in terms of international challenges. They all spoke passionately on the continual need to develop international cooperation and the need to improve processes around information sharing.

The Commissioner from Brazil, Cristiano de Souza Eloi, highlighted the areas of good practice with the International Police Cooperation Centre in Rio de Janeiro. Major General Mohammad Ashrafuzzaman Siddiqui, the Director General of the Border Guard in Bangladesh, was keen to emphasise the success they had achieved on the implementation of cross border cooperation with India and Akuila Ratu, from the Pacific Immigration Development Community, referenced the Pacific Transnational Crime Network as a model coordination centre within that region.

Regional and international cooperation continued as a major theme throughout the three days of the conference and there was a highly successful closed agency workshop on Inter-Agency Cooperation and Information Sharing which was led by Rocco Messina, the Head of the Border Security and Management Unit of the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre (UNCCT).

A number of people spoke of the old adage 'a need to know and a need to share' but one speaker put it clearly into current context when he stated 'we have a responsibility to share but that has to be done within trusted partnerships'.

Supported by:

OSCE Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe | European Association of Airport and Seaport Police | MARRI Migration, Asylum, Refugees Regional Initiative | AFRICAN UNION ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL COUNCIL, AU-ECOSOCC, NIGERIA | ISIO ISIO - International Security Industry Organization | International Association of CIP Professionals | NS&RC

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Another significant topic was obviously that of migration. We heard that 2023 was the deadliest year on record for migrant deaths which numbered nearly 8,600, an increase of 20% on 2022. These figures alone clearly evidencing the urgent need for effective action concerning the movement of migrants to prevent further loss of lives.

We covered many areas of border challenges and concern over the course of the event, including:

• Terrorism
• Maritime
• Serious Organised Crime Groups
• Smuggling drugs, firearms and counterfeit goods
• Trafficking Human Beings
• Document Fraud and Identity Management and the

• Future of Borders

There were also a number of workshops which took place. Some were open to all delegates, others due to their content were restricted to Agency personnel. These included sessions on:

• Challenges for Small Ports and Airfields
• Technology
• IT/Technology at the Borde as an Enabler/Threat
• Latest/New Modus Operandi
• Countering Terrorism
• Watchlisting
• Identity and Travel Documents

I think for the first time over the course of a number of years that the WBSC has been taking place, the subject of Illegal Fishing Activity was raised as a growing concern

as well as some commentary on serious organised crime groups becoming increasingly involved in Waste Trafficking disposal.

The conference also included a number of deep dive sessions on the ever-evolving use of technology but I was a little surprised that we did not hear more about the potential impact of cybercrime and cyber attacks on our ports and borders.

Artificial Intelligence, Machine Learning, Algorithms and Data Sets were consistently referenced and it is noticeably clear from the observations made by both delegates and speakers that the potential benefits and disbenefits of the use of such will be the subject of much debate going forward.
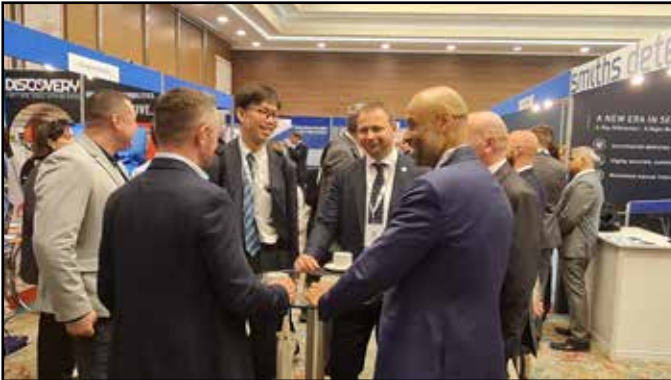
The final plenary session focused on the future of borders and included speakers from Frontex, the United States Customs and Border Protection, The United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre (UNCTT), the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and from the Private Sector.

This was a tremendous finish to a great event and touched upon some of the most pertinent issues for the future of border management including, Integrated Border Stability, Secure-Seamless Travel, Digitalization, Free Movement Zones and an update on ETIAS Travel Authorisations.

We are extremely grateful to all of the speakers who have given up

their time to share their thoughts, knowledge and experiences. We are also very fortunate to have the support of a number of International Organisations and Associations, some of whom I have already mentioned but also the European Association of Airport and Seaport Police (EAASP), the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the Migration, Asylum, Refugee Regional Initiative (MARRI).

In closing, finally, I do hope you have really enjoyed the conference and your time in Istanbul and that you go away, having learned something new, having made professional contacts who may be able to assist you in the future and most importantly having made new friends.

The WBSC event will be in Madrid next year and I look forward to seeing you there.

John Donlon QPM FSyI
WBSC Conference Chair

Venezuelan Migrants Drive USD 529.1M Boost to Colombia's Economy: IOM Study

Venezuelan migrants and refugees in Colombia accounted for a USD 529.1 million economic impact in the country in 2022, according to a new study by the International Organization for Migration (IOM). This highlights the significant economic contribution of Venezuelan migrants and refugees across Latin America and the Caribbean.

"Migration acts as a driver of development, and these studies provide empirical evidence supporting this and show how migration can foster growth in the economic and social force in host countries," said Diego Beltrand, IOM's Special Envoy for the regional response to the outflows of Venezuelan Migrants and Refugees.

The study, The Fiscal Impact of Venezuelan Migration in Colombia: Reality versus Potential, show that the fiscal impact in 2022 represented almost 2 percent of the total tax revenue in the country and is projected to potentially increase to USD 804.3 million with full regularization of Venezuelans by 2023.

A notable aspect of the study is the high employment rate of Venezuelan migrants. 90 per cent of the working-age population is employed and 20 per cent are educated. However, only 18 percent are employed in their respective fields, with many working in informal sectors, limiting income generation.

Additional research conducted in Aruba, Costa Rica, Chile, the Dominican Republic, and Peru reinforces the positive impact of Venezuelan migrants and refugees, and is notable in Panama, where Venezuelan entrepreneurs have invested over USD 1.8 billion in the last decade, creating approximately 40,000 jobs, 70 per cent of which are held by Panamanians. As of April 2024, there are 7.7 million Venezuelan migrants and refugees worldwide, 6.6 million of whom live in Latin America and the Caribbean.

The study further highlights that youth migrants encounter barriers to accessing work opportunities, with women having lower employment rates than men. Furthermore, despite efforts by development actors and financial organizations to enhance employment prospects and public services for migrants and refugees, difficulties in validating their professional qualifications, discrimination and xenophobia sometimes impede their socio-economic and integration.

The findings of this study, conducted in collaboration with the Business Chamber of Venezuelans Abroad (CAVEX), Konrad Adenauer Stiftung and Foundation ideas for Peace (FIP), mark a pivotal moment in recognizing the transformative potential of Venezuelan migrants and refugees in fostering inclusive communities across Latin America and the Caribbean. They lay the foundation for the implementation of policies and initiatives to promote their integration and sustainable development in the region.

BORDER SECURITY
REPORT

Watch the latest webinar recordings at **www.border-security-report.com/webinar-library**

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The impact of the EES and ETIAS on the European security. Warning about the emergence of fake ETIAS websites

View directly at www.border-security-report.com/the-impact-of-the-ees-and-etias-on-the-european-security-warning-about-the-emergence-of-fake-etias-websites/

Entry Exit System (EES) and their implications for international travel

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Border Security and Migration Challenges in South East Europe

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Countering the Movement of Terrorists Across Borders

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New foster+freeman VSC9000: Document Examination Workstation for the detection of counterfeit, forged, and altered documents

foster+freeman has announced the VSC9000, a revolutionary document examination workstation designed to empower border security agencies with unparalleled accuracy and efficiency in document authentication.

From Forensics to the Frontlines: Building upon the trusted legacy of VSC technology, the VSC9000 brings forensic-grade document interrogation capabilities to the fast-paced world of border security. Equipped with a high-performance optical and illumination system, it equips security personnel with the tools to:

Authenticate legitimate travel documents

Reveal sophisticated forgeries

Identify evidence of tampering or manipulation

Unmatched Accuracy in Every Detail: The VSC9000 captures high-resolution images at magnifications ranging from 0x to 480x, allowing for meticulous examination of even the most microscopic details.

foster+freeman has spent over four decades collaborating with document examiners, security feature manufacturers, and document issuers to understand the evolving needs of document security.

Thales Drives Global Border Security Innovations

Border management is undergoing a significant evolution, with advanced solutions addressing diverse needs globally. From manual counters to self-service options, innovative solutions are reshaping the efficiency and security of border crossings.


At manual counters, streamlined solutions are modernizing primary inspections, utilizing cutting-edge technology to conduct thorough screenings swiftly while ensuring a balance between security and speed. The Thales Border Face Pod seamlessly integrates into manual immigration processes, optimizing effectiveness while ensuring swift and accurate traveler identification.

Self-service solutions empower travelers with user-friendly interfaces and advanced biometric authentication, enhancing the passenger experience while maintaining stringent security protocols. The Thales Gemalto Border Kiosk facilitates traveler pre-enrollment, simplifying registration processes, while Thales Next-Gen ABC Gates utilize leading multimodal biometric recognition (face, iris, and fingers) for optimal accuracy.

These solutions, adopted globally and trusted by governments and border authorities, play a crucial role in safeguarding national borders. Additionally, cybersecurity innovations ensure the resilience of critical infrastructure against evolving threats.

Teledyne FLIR Expands its AI-Enabled Neutrino Ground ISR Series

Teledyne FLIR has announced the next mid-wave infrared (MWIR) Neutrino Ground ISR imaging module. The new ITAR-free Neutrino SX8-ISR 35-700 model with 1280×1024 resolution combines Teledyne FLIR's MWIR camera module and continuous zoom (CZ) lens for integrators developing intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) systems.
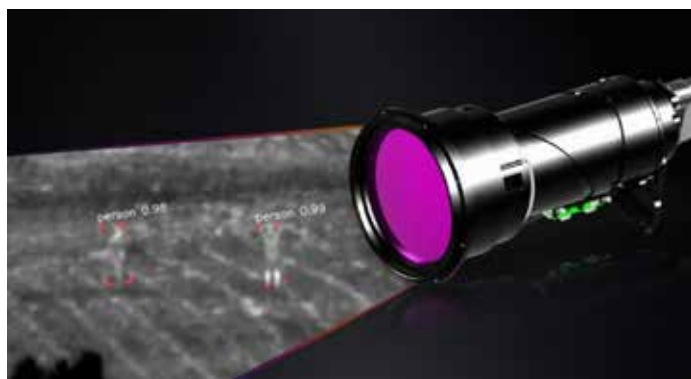
The Neutrino SX8-ISR 35-700 offers high-performance imaging, industry-leading operational lifetime, and simplified integration with market-leading control electronics from InVeo Designs LLC, It comes standard with multiple connectivity options including Gigabit Ethernet (GigE), Camera Link, and RS232/422 enabling faster data transfer and seamless integration into networked ISR, perimeter security, border surveillance, and counter-UAS (CUAS) systems.

The industry adopted and highly configurable AgileCore™ imaging electronics interface seamlessly with the new Teledyne FLIR AVP, an advanced video processor that powers Prism™ AI and computational imaging at the edge. The AVP, built on the latest Qualcomm QCS8550, efficiently runs Teledyne FLIR Prism AI software providing detection, classification, and target tracking. It also operates Prism ISP algorithms including super resolution, image fusion, atmospheric turbulence removal, electronic stabilization, local-contrast enhancement, and noise reduction, to improve data fidelity and more accurate decision support.

Integrated Biometrics Launches Mannix—The World's Most Compact Mobile Palm Scanner

Integrated Biometrics (IB) has announced the launch of Mannix, the world's first compact, mobile palm scanner designed for forensic, law enforcement, special operations and identity applications around the world. Mannix utilizes IB's cutting-edge and patented Zero Bezel Film (ZTX) technology to enable intuitive palm and fingerprint capture on an FAP 60 FBI-certified device.

Mannix is available in both embedded module and standalone versions powered by IB's SDK driving Android and Windows devices. This provides a unique, mobile palm-print solution never before available in the market. Leveraging its patented LES film technology, Mannix captures upper palms, lower palms, writer's palms, and rolled prints, in addition to traditional fingerprints.

"What makes Mannix so unique from other scanners is that it is so small, lightweight and rugged, yet it can be powered simply by your mobile phone," said David Gerulski, EVP at Integrated Biometrics. Slightly larger than the average adult hand, the entire Mannix assembly measures in at only 161 mm x 161 mm x 20 mm.

Mannix's ZTX technology removes the traditional bezels allowing maximum flexibility and ease of use. Its compact size and lightweight design make it ideal for applications in the field.

OSI Systems Receives Order for $9 Million to Provide Cargo and Vehicle Inspection Systems

OSI Systems has announced that its Rapiscan Security division received an order from an international customer for approximately $9 million to provide the Company's Eagle® M60 high energy mobile cargo and vehicle inspection systems including related service and support.

This order represents the initial fulfillment under a multi-year framework agreement between the Company and the customer, setting the stage for future supply of additional solutions.

OSI Systems' Chairman and CEO, Deepak Chopra, commented, "We are proud to receive this award to deploy one of our leading cargo and vehicle inspection systems. We are committed to helping our customers in their efforts to enhance border checkpoint safety and security."

Smiths Detection X-ray Scanner Revolutionising Security Screening and Substance Identification

Smiths Detection has announced that it has launched the SDX 10060 XDi, a ground-breaking X-ray scanner powered by diffraction technology.
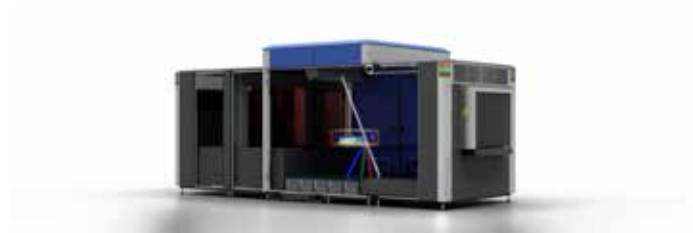
X-ray Diffraction (XRD) is a powerful inspection technology offering highly accurate material discrimination and substance identification based on an object's molecular structure. XRD is particularly suited to detecting constantly evolving compounds in powder, liquid or solid forms, such as 'homemade' explosives or narcotics, even for materials with similar densities.

Multi-level baggage and material handling operations and express forwarders are under pressure to screen huge volumes quickly and efficiently. The SDX 10060 XDi can transform this process by automating the resolution of potential explosive alarms, in turn improving both security and efficiency.
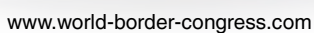
Due to its exceptional sensitivity, XRD technology can also be very effectively deployed to support customs agencies in screening for a range of contraband items including narcotics, helping to mitigate ever-growing threats to society.

World Border Security Congress

25th-27th March 2025
Madrid, Spain

www.world-border-congress.com

Patrolling the Periphery - Developing Border Strategies Through Co-operation and Technology

SAVE THE DATES

Spain's vast coastline and strategic location between Africa and Europe present unique challenges for the National Police and Guardia Civil.

Spain faces a constant influx of migrants seeking a better life in Europe. The Canary Islands and the enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla, bordering Morocco, are popular entry points. Patrolling these vast stretches, especially maritime borders, requires significant resources.

Spain is also a key entry point for hashish from Morocco and cocaine from South America destined for other European countries. The decentralized nature of trafficking groups makes it difficult to infiltrate and dismantle them.

The country, and region's, border security landscape is constantly evolving. By addressing these challenges through international collaboration, innovative technologies, and strategic resource allocation, the international border security community can strive towards a more secure future.

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 Madrid, Spain on 25th-27th March 2025 for the next gathering of international border security, protection and migration management professionals.

www.world-border-congress.com

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