



Russians lay flowers at the site where a suicide bomber set off an explosion that ripped through Domodedovo airport near Moscow in January 2011.



# INCREASING SECURITY

*Airline data sharing raises privacy concerns*

by per Concordiam Staff

**For the past 10 years, the goal of airport security has been to keep bombs and bombers off planes. Airport buildings themselves were not considered high priority targets. But that changed in January 2011 when a suicide bomber attacked Moscow's Domodedovo Airport, killing 35 and injuring more than 100. The blast occurred in the international arrivals hall, where passengers meet family and friends after passing through customs. The Domodedovo attack appears to be the first time that violent extremists have attacked an unrestricted airport area since the failed 2007 bombing at Glasgow Airport in Scotland, when assailants rammed a fiery truck into glass doors near the passenger check-in counter.**

In response to the attack in Moscow, Russian authorities widened the airport security net to include public airport areas and mandated security screenings for all those entering a Russian airport. The governments of the Czech Republic and Ukraine have also beefed up security by equipping airports with more bomb-sniffing dogs and sharpshooters. Just weeks after the Moscow attacks, the European Commission introduced a plan to begin passenger security screenings at the time of ticket purchase and share this data among European Union members. The Domodedovo incident also resurrected debate over whether the EU should widen the use of intrusive full-body scanners.

Alternatively, privacy advocates have begun questioning the wisdom and effectiveness of security enhancements in the wake of Domodedovo, adding another wrinkle to the long-standing debate over restrictions on air travel. Striking a balance between maintaining national security and preserving civil liberty has grown increasingly complicated. Philip Baum of the London-based security publication Aviation Security

International warned in a January 2011 *Telegraph* article that adding security checkpoints may do more harm than good. Extremists are attracted to places containing large groups of people because it maximizes the destruction and number of victims. And the bigger the death toll, the bigger the media coverage terrorists receive. "As you ratchet up the number of checks, you have large numbers of people standing in line and the queues themselves can become targets," Baum said.

And security screenings cannot accomplish everything. Domodedovo spokeswoman Elena Galanova told Russia's Interfax news agency that 22.3 million travelers pass through Domodedovo annually, not including airport visitors. Considering that volume, "total security screening is practically impossible. It just leads to a massive crush," Galanova said. It is difficult to screen areas, such as arrival terminals, where large crowds of people gather. Complicating the security picture, some airports, to generate revenue, encourage the public to shop, drink and eat in the terminal. Keeping track of those shoppers and diners can be difficult.



A German police officer guards the departure area of Munich's airport in November 2010.

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## EU PASSENGER DATA SHARING

The European Commission's passenger data-sharing proposal would expand on previously existing agreements with the U.S., Canada and Australia. The commission would require airlines to provide names, addresses and other passenger data for flights entering and leaving the EU.

Originally, the proposal would have forced airlines to share passenger data for all flights, including those between EU states. However, European Parliament member Manfred Weber told the Deutsche Welle that it would have contradicted the Schengen agreement, which guarantees visa- and passport-free travel for most EU members. Weber added that he "cannot believe that we are now looking to screen the movements of people in Europe, for this clearly contradicts free travel and the freedom of movement." Security advocates say providing passenger lists gives authorities more time to identify and remove suspects and reduces misidentification.

But how would that data be protected? EU Home Affairs Commissioner Cecilia Malmström pledged that the commission "would create safeguards to ensure maximum protection of passengers' privacy," the Deutsche Welle reported in February 2011.

European parliamentarians have raised concerns about data abuse. "If we do intend to go through with it, we need to establish ways of organizing data so that it doesn't get out of control and abused," said Birgit Sippel, a German member of the European Parliament. "In the end, we will ask that the swaps contain very little – and targeted – information." But, before this proposal can become law, the 27 EU governments must reach consensus.

Germany's highest court has enforced limits on data sharing. In March 2010, it overturned a law that allowed authorities to retain phone call recordings and e-mails to fight crime and terrorism. The court demanded stricter controls on the data and ordered information deleted immediately. The ruling acted as a warning to private sector companies such as Google, Facebook and Microsoft about the need for transparency regarding personal data, *Der Spiegel* said.

## FULL BODY SCANNERS

Equally controversial is the use of full body scanners. The scanners have been at the center of the debate on airport security since their introduction in May 2007 in the Netherlands. A handful of other European nations also use them: the U.K., France, Germany, and Italy. The EU's European Economic and Social Committee advised against the use of the scanners as recently as March 2011. Etienne Shouppe, Belgium's secretary of state for transport, described scanners as "excessive" in a meeting of aviation security experts in January 2010, *The Christian Science Monitor* reported. Spain voiced concerns about the invasiveness of these machines that can peer through clothing and create 3-D images of passengers. The *Guardian* reports that the scanners threaten to breach child pornography laws in the U.K. Civil liberties groups demand scanner images be safeguarded against distribution.

Body scanner security breaches have occurred in the U.S. For example, scanner images that Florida passengers were told would be deleted immediately were published online, the *Washington Post* reported in November 2010. Additionally, when travelers at U.S. airports refuse the scan, they must undergo



# THE NEED FOR SPEED

*in Check-in*

The United Kingdom has launched a demonstration project to help speed passengers through airports without sacrificing security. The streamlined 15- to 20-minute security check could use eye scans, real-time behavioral analysis via telescopic cameras, and “managed queuing” that discreetly sorts low-risk passengers from high-risk ones.

The goal is nothing less than a structural overhaul of unpopular airport screening procedures that promise to grow more cumbersome as the number of global air travelers rises and security threats multiply. Experts have predicted eventual systemic breakdown at large European airports in places like London, Amsterdam, Frankfurt and Paris.

Mike Shaw, director of the U.K. branch of French electronics corporation Thales, called for an improvement in a process that treats all airline passengers as “potential terrorists.” “Ninety-nine percent of everyone who travels just wants to get from A to B,” Shaw said. Thales successfully demonstrated the new airport screening concept, known as INSTINCT-TD2, to British security officials in early 2011. Shaw outlined the results at the Counter Terror Expo in London in April 2011.

After winning the contract from the British government in 2010, Thales enlisted academics and small- and medium-size companies to help resolve the airport security quandary. Eventually 20 companies participated in demonstrations at some of Britain’s busiest airports, including Manchester and Birmingham. The test-runs highlighted three main technologies.

One was a “recognition on the move” technology in which a traveler’s iris is scanned with beams as the passenger rides an escalator connecting an airport’s ticketing and boarding areas. For further efficiency, the passenger’s carry-on bag could run through scanners running the length of the same escalator.

Another concept involves visual surveillance of passenger facial features and behavior, hunting for flushed faces, clumsiness and other signs of nervousness that can suggest malevolent intent. Such a system could go further to measure heartbeat and changes in voice patterns. During one airport trial using such detectors, Thales caught an airport shoplifter, though no potential terrorists.

A third technology favoured by U.K. officials during the trials was a managed queuing system that separates passengers into low-, medium- and high-risk categories without their knowledge. Such unobtrusive categorizing can begin at the moment of ticket purchase, if, for example, a person makes a cash purchase of a plane ticket to a destination popular with terrorists. One of the aims is to provide “seamless passenger flow,” especially for low-risk travelers.

The U.S. is fast-tracking airport security upgrades of its own, and British officials said the Department of Homeland Security has monitored INSTINCT-TD2 for possible use in the Western Hemisphere. To be most effective, the upgraded security architecture should also be installed in terminals in Africa and Asia, not just in the large European hubs, Shaw said.

“Aviation is one of the key challenges to our security. INSTINCT is a vital part of the Government’s response in seeking innovative solutions to counter current and future threats,” U.K. Minister of Security Baroness Neville-Jones announced in December 2010. “We will continue to call on industry and universities to help drive counter-terrorism solutions.”

an “enhanced pat down” that can include touching of private areas. Hundreds of passengers have filed formal complaints.

British civil libertarian Simon Davies, director of the human-rights group Privacy International, told the Voice of America that body scanners are an affront to personal dignity. He contends that despite all of the money spent on body scanners, they have proven to be an ineffective counterterrorism tool. On the other side of the debate is Italy’s Foreign Minister Franco Frattini, who supported his country’s installation of scanners at airports in Rome, Milan and Venice. “The right not to be blown up on an airplane is a more important right” than privacy, he said in a 2010 article in *The Christian Science Monitor*.

## LIQUIDS CONTROVERSY

Wherever possible, the EU would like to ease restrictions on travel, while maintaining security. In February 2011, the EU announced it would allow airline passengers carrying wine, perfume and other liquids bought at duty-free shops outside Europe to take those items aboard planes when they catch connecting flights at about two dozen European airports, *The Associated Press* reported.

European and U.S. airport security professionals are concerned this may create a security gap and confuse passengers traveling to the U.S. The U.S. Transportation Security Administration hasn’t said whether passengers will be allowed to bring these items on U.S. domestic flights, but based on reports in 2011 this appears unlikely.

In 2006, both the EU and the U.S. agreed to ban liquids of more than 3 ounces after British authorities unraveled a plan to bomb U.S.-bound planes using liquid explosives hidden in soft drink bottles. Victoria Day, spokeswoman for the Air Transport Association, said she hopes the U.S. and the EU will “harmonize requirements to appropriately accommodate security and passenger-processing considerations.”

## LESS INTRUSION, SAME PROTECTION

At an airline industry conference in October 2010, British Airways chairman Martin Broughton made a plea for effective security without intrusiveness, the *Guardian* reported. Broughton said the U.S. and Europe are worried about removing a security measure once deemed necessary for fear that their decision would provide an opening for an attacker to penetrate the system.

The article warns governments against taking a “what if” approach to security, saying those fear-based scenarios are infinite. Broughton suggested security procedures be constantly re-evaluated for effectiveness.

*The Economist* surveyed its readers in November 2010 about whether airport security procedures such as removing laptop computers from bags and taking off our shoes really prevent attacks. Nearly three-quarters of readers said they thought airport security was already too stringent. Britain’s *The Telegraph* took the opposing view: “Airline bosses may not like security measures, but they keep us one step ahead of a versatile enemy.”

Both sides agree on one thing, however. The bombing tragedy in Russia suggests that the time is right to review airport security procedures once again. □