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High-tech electric borders strengthen Britain's security

19 August 2008

A new 'e-Borders' electronic border system will ensure that every visitor is counted in and out of the country by 2014.

More than 99% of foreign nationals from outside the EEA will be tracked in and out of Britain by 2010 through targeting of higher risk countries, the Home Office announced today.

A new 'e-Borders' electronic border system will ensure that, by 2014, every visitor is checked against immigration and security watch-lists, and counted in and out of the country.

Already the £1.2 billion e-Borders system has screened 50m passengers travelling to Britain, leading to more than 2,000 arrests, for crimes including murder, drug dealing and sex offences.

The announcement comes as the Home Office publishes [A strong new force at the border \(new window\)](#), its strategy for ensuring the UK continues to have one of the most secure borders in the world.

From this month, the UK Border Agency will trial new technology at Manchester Airport that balances high security with quicker times at immigration control.

New facial recognition gates will use scanning equipment to compare the faces of UK and EEA passengers to their biometric passports. If successful these gates could be rolled-out across the country.

Today's strategy also lays down plans for 'no fly' lists with passengers flagged up by e-Borders subsequently barred from flying with airlines into the UK.

Home Secretary's statement

Home Secretary Jacqui Smith said:

'The UK has one of the toughest borders in the world and we are determined to ensure it stays that way.

'Our hi-tech electronic borders system will allow us to count all foreign nationals in and out of the UK, while checking them against watch-lists.

'These checks make up just one part of Britain's triple ring of security, alongside fingerprint visas for three-quarters of the world's population, and the roll-out of ID cards for foreign nationals locking people to one identity.'

Liam Byrne's statement

Border and Immigration Minister Liam Byrne said:

'The British public rightly expect our borders to protect the national interest, tackling immigration crime, smuggling and tax fraud.

'Our strong new force – made up of 9,000 staff working alongside 3,000 police officers at our border – has already had large scale success with millions of pounds worth of illegal drugs seized, hundreds of weapons confiscated and tens of thousands of people barred from the UK.'

New hi-tech centre in Manchester

The UK Border Agency confirmed today that its new hi-tech centre for e-Borders will be based in Manchester, and by 2010 staff there will monitor almost every foreign passenger travelling in and out of Britain.

The new centre will create up to 250 jobs for the north west of England – joining the 25,000 staff working across the UK Border Agency across 135 countries.

The agency is signing an agreement with Manchester Airport Group to work more closely to strengthen Britain's borders and improve the experience of legitimate passengers.

The UK Border Agency was launched in April 2008 and brought together the Border and Immigration Agency, UK Visas and customs at the border. Already UKBA has:

- barred almost 6,000 people from entering Britain at juxtaposed controls since the beginning of 2008
- seized £83 million worth of illegal drugs, including almost 200 separate seizures of cocaine and heroin, since the Agency launched in April
- seized more than 200 million cigarettes worth over £6.5 million since the Agency launched in April

- taken off the streets almost 800 dangerous weapons including firearms, stun guns and hundreds of knives

Notes to editors

- A strong new force at the border will be available to download [from the UK Border Agency website \(new window\)](#).
 - The government announced [a £1.2bn programme to strengthen the UK's offshore border controls \(new window\)](#) with new passenger screening technology in November 2007.
 - When the e-Borders programme was launched, a target was set for 95% of all passengers to be counted in and out of the UK by 2010. By prioritising countries believed to pose the greatest risk, the UK Border Agency can now commit to 99% of all foreign national passengers outside of the EEA being counted in and out of the UK by 2010. [Read more on the UK Border Agency's website \(new window\)](#).
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