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SECURITY EUROPE


*The monthly inside view from Brussels
on European civil security policy, technology & business*

Flash Alert . .

SecEUR, the Brussels-based information and advisory service, offers policy and market analysis as well as business support for civil security service providers and buyers.

SECURITY EUROPE — the only on-line monthly newsletter devoted to EU civil security policy, technology and business — reports on a wide range of issues including counter-terrorism, critical infrastructure protection, corporate security, biometrics, aviation security, civil protection and security research & technology. It also includes a tenders update and security-related calendar of events across Europe.

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This special edition — with a sample full-version article from one of our recent issues — provides an overview of the range and depth of analysis we provide each month to our readers. 

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Security decisions cannot avoid economic impact, but can EU and US avoid troubling each other? Policy experts are doubtful...

BRUSSELS – The risk of economic disruption and eroding personal privacy rights will grow if the European Union and United States do not reconcile their different approaches to civil security, argue two EU and US experts well acquainted with the subject. Given that security decisions have a direct impact on the economy and vice versa, the need for better co-ordination and consultation is strong, they said.

“Too many security decisions have been dealt with in an *ad hoc* way [by Brussels and Washington], in reaction to emergency situations,” said Henry Farrell, a professor who follows privacy and data-exchange issues at George Washington University, based in the US capital.

He and fellow panelist, Sophie in’t Veld, a Dutch member of the European Parliament (MEP), analysed this unwieldy subject during an exchange of views here in late January, entitled “Regulation and national security: creating effective polices across the Atlantic.” The debate was organised by the German Marshall Fund of the United States, a think-tank partially funded by the US government.

As in’t Veld put it: “the United States complains that the EU is imposing its economic and competition policy standards on it, but we complain that Washington imposes its security standards on us. Perhaps this is the bridge to start addressing the split [in approaches between the two].”

Farrell agreed, observing that “as the risk of these situations rises, so will US-EU tensions. We should envision a predictable and rational decision-making framework – a sort of transatlantic security council – to better steer policy.”

Few areas better illustrate the problem than passenger data exchange in civil aviation, where aggressive counter-terrorism moves on the US side in recent years have forced the EU to quickly cobble together operational responses to accommodate Washington’s needs – even at the risk of undermining its own data-privacy rules.

The legal uncertainty created by these kinds of decisions and the costs for business “are exploding,” said the Dutch MEP. “In my own country alone – and we’re a small country – the banking sector said the cost of transferring data to public authorities was EUR 320 million in 2007. That’s a lot of money.

European business has been consulted on economic policy issues across the EU but not on security ones. And they should be.”

To be fair, the European Commission – the EU’s law-proposing branch – is aware of the problem and is expanding its public-private consultations to the field of civil security policy. However, it only began the process in the last year or so and only for selected topics such as security of conventional explosives sites or critical infrastructure protection.

Yet to significantly synchronise EU and US policy-making, even in an area as critical as civil security, is fraught with problems and would probably take a disaster of epic proportions to achieve any rapid progress, as both speakers implicitly acknowledged.

“US institutions will be more difficult to change than those of the EU,” said Farrell. “Congress is very resistant to suggestions it should consult with US partners precisely due to fears about international security. And by law the DHS [US Department of Homeland Security] can only give very limited consultation rights to non-US actors. Moreover, it is notoriously bad at organising its privacy and obligation-to-share-information policies – even though the [independent investigative] 9/11 Commission’s report [issued in 2004] recommends far more information-sharing across the whole government.”

For in’t Veld, the more pressing issue is lack of democratic control and transparency whenever the two sides do manage to strike a transatlantic agreement in civil security. “Look at what European Commission officials and their US counterparts have been doing in the area of data privacy protection. These ‘data protection’ talks are really about EU-US data exchanges, which can be used for many purposes beyond counter-terrorism per se,” she said.


“Instead of negotiations, they like to call their contacts ‘exploratory talks.’ The Commission has been conducting these ‘informal’ exploratory talks on data protection issues for years. It presents these bureaucratic agreements with the United States to the [EU’s] Council of Ministers for its approval and then they go to national parliaments, which are in no position to coordinate with each other to question or block them. So they just wave them on. And all this is being done without a democratic mandate,” she concluded.

The upshot: *Public-private forums will surely grow as the consultative norm for setting the right level of security*

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standards on either side of the Atlantic. The EU and US have stepped up consultations in the last year or so to better coordinate homeland security policy, but the talks are subject-specific and do not represent much of an attempt to reconcile divergent views about the economic-vs-security aspects of homeland security policy.

As in't Veld fears, however, there is a rising and real risk that data privacy rights will be undermined inadvertently by bureaucratic momentum and pressure from intel-

ligence agencies in both the EU and US. This means that privacy-enhancing technologies are destined to take on more importance. Companies and research institutes capable of delivering secure and very discretionary fire-walled data delivery systems should get involved in these public-private consultations or in research projects funded by EU or US public sources. Stakeholders with operational experience in both regions would be wise to capitalise on that experience. 

Technology & Policy: The Biometrics of Air Security

(Published March '08)

Europe's ambitions for Passenger Name Records and biometrics headed in right direction, but don't overlook privacy, says SITA

BRUSSELS – The leading edge of a secure border control system for Europe will be the fusion of biometrics with air passenger name records (PNRs), says a top official at SITA, the air transport communica-

tions company owned by the world's airlines. But this must be strengthened by a coherent EU framework policy on . . .

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Research: Security of Air Transport Chain

(Published March '08)

EU PASR project identifies operational security concepts for air transport, but calls for further study activity

ÜBERLINGEN, Germany – The final results of an early test-case security research project funded by the EU known as PATIN ('Protection of Air Transportation and Infrastructure') are decidedly

mixed. While PATIN's research consortium achieved a workable set of operational concepts for protecting an airport's diversity of critical infrastructures, the constraints of . . .

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Tender Watch

(Published April '08)

Update on tenders and calls-for-proposals in EU security

BRUSSELS – Several calls-for-proposals are currently opened with topics ranging from space-related security applications to protection and consequence-management arising from terrorist threats to critical

networks (energy, water, transport, etc.). Also, several other calls are already announced for 2008 in the field of . . .

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Events Calendar

(Published April '08)

Upcoming European security conferences & exhibits

1. CoESS Private Security Summit "Private Security at the Crossroad of the EU's Future". Brussels, 12 June. <http://www.coess.org/Default.htm>

2. Biometrics 2008. London, 22-23 October 2008 www.biometrics2008.com

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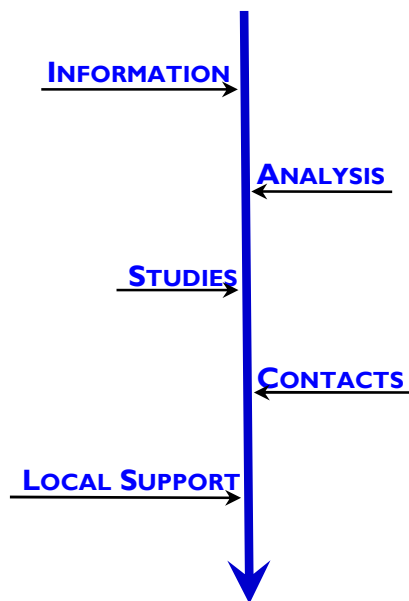
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