



**Open briefing of the Counter-Terrorism Committee on
"Border control and security in the context of counter-terrorism"**

31 August 2023, 10.00 a.m.–12.00 p.m. EST

Via Microsoft Teams

Current trends, threats, challenges and gaps in countering terrorism with effective border controls; sharing of good practices and possible approaches for strengthening border security globally; enhancing effective implementation of Security Council resolutions 1373 (2001), 2178 (2014) and 2396 (2017) and potential linkages to other Council resolutions pertaining to border control and security.

Isabelle

In my 21 years with the Biometrics Institute, I have seen **plenty of evidence that biometrics have a positive impact**. They do make this **world a better and safer place**.

As with any security technology, there are **weaknesses and risks in using** biometrics but there are **good practice tools and standards to mitigate** against these risks. One example is the [*UN Compendium of recommended practices for the responsible use and sharing of biometrics in counter-terrorism*](#) and our [*Three Laws of Biometrics*](#) which instruct to develop policy and process before you decide to use biometrics.

The Biometrics Institute is a **global multi-stakeholder community** representing over 220 organisations from **30 countries, many of them government agencies**. For 22 years this **passionate community** has been working on **developing and implementing tools** to ensure the **responsible, ethical and effective use of biometrics**. And we will continue to do so.

Let me introduce one of these passionate practitioners who is an Advisory Council member of the Biometrics Institute with a long history in counter-terrorism, Roger Baldwin.

Question: Roger, the UN Compendium was published in 2018, what have been the key developments in biometrics, especially their use at borders, since then?

Roger

The Covid pandemic accelerated the requirement for contactless biometric data acquisition technologies (e.g. fingerprints) while the use of face recognition has increased and become a favoured modality because:

- E-gates already incorporate the remote capture of travellers' face images which reduces the risk of infection and improves general hygiene in the high volume biometric systems often found at land, marine or air border crossing points
- Face masks presented a specific challenge to e-gate systems during the pandemic and enhanced algorithm were developed to mitigate their effect on face recognition
- Face recognition algorithms, in general, have rapidly become more accurate not only for 1:1 verification purposes such as e-gate processing but also for 1:n searching against watchlist galleries for counter terrorism and other border management purposes
- This increased accuracy has also addressed the issue of demographic differentials or bias in many face recognition systems and in the best performing algorithms such differentials are described by independent testing laboratories as negligible

However, face recognition surveillance systems have, in the last few years, been subject to criticism by some civil society groups because of false positive outputs being acted upon inappropriately by some law enforcement agencies. This has led to face recognition systems being banned in several jurisdictions and its use greatly restricted in some upcoming major legislation e.g. the EU AI Act. It is therefore essential that the guidance in the CT Compendium is followed closely by all law enforcement and border management officials to ensure that:

- The use of biometric search systems comply fully with the national laws and regulations of Member States, as well as international law and especially Human Rights Law
- The Compendium recommends standards for the processing and interpretation of biometric search results that may identify an individual and especially where the data may be sub-optimal e.g. biometric data (e.g. fingerprints) recovered from crime scene examinations
- The Compendium sets out clearly the responsibilities of investigators and border officials to conduct a thorough, detailed contextual assessment of any biometric search result before taking any action that may be detrimental to the data subject

The effective management of face recognition and other biometric search results, using appropriate quality standards, is essential in order to reassure travellers and maintain public confidence and remove the need for bans and restrictive legislation which are often counterproductive and can damage and disrupt counterterrorism measures and potentially put lives at risk.

[Isabelle](#)

There has never been a more important time than now in 2023 for a responsible and ethical approach to biometrics. The Compendium described the protocols, checks and balances for using biometric systems which are as relevant today as they were 5 years ago. Consequently, the Biometrics Institute looks forward to working with the UN in the future to ensure that biometrics continue to be a very effective counter terrorism tool but with the necessary guardrails in place to protect the legal rights and civil liberties of all.

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