



United Nations Security Council Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED)

BORDER SECURITY AND ARMS TRAFFICKING

In an increasingly interconnected world, the ease with which people and goods can cross borders is accelerating. The movement of terrorists is no exception. Effective border security is the first line of defence against terrorist travel, including foreign terrorist fighters, and the illegal cross-border movement of goods and cargo. Maintaining secure air, land and maritime borders is a challenge faced by all Member States. In terms of air borders, many States struggle to ensure basic aviation-security measures, including the screening of goods and the cross-checking of travelers against national and international watch lists and databases. This requires both financial and human resources, equipment and specialist skills, as well as intra-State and inter-State cooperation. Land borders can be tremendously lengthy and porous, therefore making them difficult to monitor, and maintaining secure maritime borders and policing sea and coastal areas requires a high level of technical capacity and resources in order to effectively patrol vast marine spaces which often lack physical borders and checkpoints.



MORE INFORMATION

More info about CTC and CTED, including the CTC Chair and CTED's Executive Director, can be found here:

<https://www.un.org/securitycouncil/ctc/content/about-us-0>.

A list of FAQs is available here: <https://www.un.org/securitycouncil/ctc/content/frequently-asked-questions-faqs>.

The threat posed by foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs) continues to put pressure on Member States and the international community to strengthen border security and prevent the travel of FTFs. Following the Security Council's adoption of resolution [2178 \(2014\)](#) and 2396 (2017), aimed at stemming the flow of FTFs, the Council's Counter-Terrorism Committee and its Executive Directorate (CTED) have further strengthened the engagement with and in analysis of States' counter-terrorism capacities, including in relation to border security. Analysis conducted by CTED has revealed major gaps in a number of States' implementation of the border-security requirements of resolutions [1373 \(2001\)](#) and [1624 \(2005\)](#). This in turn presents additional obstacles to the effective implementation of resolution 2178 (2014) and 2396 (2017).

Despite this, several States have taken steps to strengthen border security and prevent the travel of FTFs. These steps include passport confiscation, the introduction of a requirement for transit visas, and more effective use of the databases of the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL) to conduct screening in order to detect and identify FTFs. Some States have extended access to the INTERPOL I-24/7 secure communications network beyond their national central bureaus (NCBs) to other relevant border authorities, such as immigration at the frontline, and increased the use of the INTERPOL database on stolen and lost travel documents; more States are also populating the INTERPOL database of suspected FTFs. Yet, many States still lack access to relevant databases, including INTERPOL databases, or the ISIL (Da'esh) and Al-Qaida sanctions lists.

In enhancing border security, the use of Advance Passenger Information (API) and Passenger Name Records (PNR) are important tools. In its simplest form, API is an electronic communications system that collects biographical passenger data and basic flight details from airline carriers and transmits the data to border-security authorities in the destination country prior to the flight's arrival. This gives border-security authorities additional time to perform enough checks of all in-bound passengers against relevant sanctions and watch lists while minimizing delays in the processing of inbound passengers. PNR are generated through the information provided by passengers as they book their airline tickets and check into their flights. This information is held in the carrier's reservation and departure control systems, and may include a broad range of information, including the passenger's name, his/her travel dates, ticket information, contact details, name of travel agent, means of payment, seat number, and baggage information. This data can be used to create a "link analysis" capability, which can illuminate hidden connections in order to identify previously unknown risks.

In its resolution [2396 \(2017\)](#), the Security Council decided that Member States shall: (i) establish API; (ii) require airlines operating in their territories to provide API to appropriate national authorities; (iii) share this information with the State of residence or nationality or with the countries of return, transit, or relocation, and relevant international organizations; and (iv) ensure that API is analysed by all relevant authorities. States shall also develop the capability to collect and process PNR data and ensure that such data is used by, and shared with, all their respective competent national authorities. The Council further encourages airlines to share PNR with relevant or concerned States to detect FTFs returning to their countries of origin or nationality or travelling or relocating to a third country.

Despite the increasing number of States developing API and PNR capabilities, many States struggle with the implementation of these highly technical systems. Further ways to prevent the movement of terrorists or terrorist groups include strengthening the control of issuing identity papers and travel documents, and the introduction of measures to prevent counterfeiting, forgery, or the fraudulent use of identity papers and travel documents. However, many States lack clear policies and measures to ensure the security and integrity of the identity and travel-document issuance process.

Biometric identification is an effective tool for countering the threat posed by suspected terrorists including FTFs who attempt to travel internationally and use falsified travel documents. In resolution [2396 \(2017\)](#), the Council decided that States shall develop and implement systems to collect biometric data, which could include fingerprints, photographs, facial recognition, and other relevant identifying biometric data, in order to responsibly and properly identify terrorists, in compliance with domestic law and international human rights law. The Council encourages States to share this data responsibly among relevant Member States, as well as with INTERPOL and other relevant international bodies. In the context of a terrorism-related investigation, forensic science can assist investigators and prosecutors by linking an individual to a specific activity, event, place, or material, or to another individual. Member States' use of biometric systems continues to expand, and the technological advancements in this field are fast. Many Member States struggle to implement these capabilities and to keep pace with these developments. It is therefore essential to strengthen Member States' capacities in this area.

Coordinated and comprehensive border management (CBM) strategies, which require close coordination among the competent authorities at border locations, have proven to be a highly effective tool for efficiently and effectively managing national borders. CBM strategies provide for coordination of policies, programmes, and delivery among cross-border regulatory agencies with the aim of strengthening the management of trade and travel flows, while also addressing security concerns. The [2018 Addendum](#) to [the 2015 Security Council Guiding Principles on Foreign Terrorist Fighters](#) provides Member States with further guidance on implementation of API and PNR, watchlists and databases, and on the responsible use and sharing of biometrics.

Ensuring effective border security is an integral part of any comprehensive and integrated national counter-terrorism strategy, and it requires collective action by States and relevant international and regional organizations. The CTC and its Executive Directorate (CTED) can assist States to identify gaps, needs and challenges as well as share good practices in this area, and to facilitate the delivery of technical assistance and financial support to ensure implementation of the relevant Council resolutions and the Committee's related recommendations. It should be recalled that all measures must be taken in accordance with domestic law and international obligations and in full respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.