



HOTSPOT

USING BIOMETRIC DATA TO STRENGTHEN BORDER SECURITY

HOTSPOT is an initiative that works to stop terrorists crossing borders and to disrupt the networks that facilitate their travel.

INTERPOL's databases of fingerprints and facial images are central to the project.

In the first instance, the project aims to increase the number of checks that our member countries make against the two databases. In the long term, this will help detect foreign terrorist fighters and criminals who try to cross borders using irregular migration flows.



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Frontline checks

Law enforcement officers at frontline locations around the world will be able to crosscheck biometric information against INTERPOL's face and fingerprint databases.

Results are returned in real time. This means that, in the event of a match, follow-up action can be taken immediately.

Mobile devices

Where there is a reliable Internet connection, checks are made directly against INTERPOL's Automatic Fingerprint Identification System (AFIS) using the Organization's secure global police communications system known as I-24/7.

If there is a lack of Internet coverage, the cross-checking of biometric data is triggered the next time an Internet connection is reached. In this way, biometric checks can be carried out in remote locations or where technical infrastructure is inadequate.

Testing in the Western Balkans

A data collection and screening trial was conducted in Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia in September and October 2019.

Specialized officers from the INTERPOL General Secretariat worked with officers in the four countries from the INTERPOL National Central Bureaus and national police agencies responsible for forensics, borders, counter-terrorism and organized crime.

Over a four-week period, officers collected fingerprints and facial photos from 480 individuals at border crossing points and reception centers for irregular migrants. These profiles were then screened against INTERPOL's databases. On optimal Internet connection, crosscheck results were received within 20 seconds.

The profiles were collected from individuals – all over the age of 18 – claiming to come from Central Asia and the Middle East and North Africa region.

Data comparison revealed one match of an individual who had already been found trying to enter Europe illegally already in 2011. Case information was shared with respective countries for appropriate action.

Implementation

The testing phase provided a solid basis for the development of the HOTSPOT project. It is designed as a flexible concept that can be implemented worldwide, according to the specific needs of member countries.

In the course of our operations, we cover many different locations, such as border crossings, green lines, reception/detention centres for irregular migrants, and police stations.

The HOTSPOT concept has been rolled out in a number of countries in Europe, with three operations conducted in 2021:

- Operation HOTSPOT Stonebrood, United Kingdom (52 crosschecks over one week);
- Operation HOTSPOT Slovenia (69 crosschecks over one week);
- Operation HOTSPOT WB21, Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia (837 crosschecks over two weeks).

The HOTSPOT model offers a combination of technical infrastructure, mobile technology and training to deliver a sustainable and integrated mechanism to reinforce border security.

Future operations will be carried out in the Western Balkans, Central Asia and West Africa.



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