
Personal Letter to Mr. Franco Frattini by Ms. Meg Hillier



Home Office

**Meg Hillier MP PARLIAMENTARY
UNDER SECRETARY OF STATE**
2 Marsham Street,
London SW1P 4DF
www.homeoffice.gov.uk

**Vice President Franco Frattini European Commission
B-1049 Brussels**

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EU PNR PROPOSALS

We welcome the Commission's proposal for an EU PNR system and I look forward to discussing it with you in the future. This is a key opportunity to share data in the fight against criminality targeting our borders. We need a

permissive framework at the EU level which sets a basis for collection and sharing of PNR and enables our authorities to use this data to maintain the security and integrity of all of our borders.

Such passenger and crew information is key to a fundamentally more effective, efficient and secure border. Stronger cooperation in the EU will increase the effectiveness of our domestic programme and provide wider benefits for us all, while ensuring that we strike an appropriate balance between the right to security and other fundamental values, including the right to privacy.

There were over 200 million passenger movements across the UK border in 2006 and these are rising rapidly. The EU as a whole is faced with similar increases in international travel which brings us great economic and social benefits. However, mass migration also poses challenges of illegal immigration and cross border crime and terrorism.

In the UK, we have run a pilot project, Project Semaphore, for three years to assess the value of using both API and PNR data. This has had many significant successes and demonstrated the value of passenger information for border control and law enforcement purposes and in the protection of the vulnerable. This includes over 1300 arrests for crimes including murder, rape and assault, the offloading of passengers who would not qualify for entry to the UK and seizure of many false documents, tobacco, and drugs.

Since the project started, it has covered 38 million passenger movements, and issued over 17,000 alerts. As you can see from these figures, the system only flagged a very small proportion of travellers (1 in 2200) for further intervention, but of those nearly 1 in 12 were arrested. This shows the extent to which using this data safeguards and enhances the rights of legitimate travellers who do not need to be subject to detailed scrutiny, while detecting successfully the small proportion of travellers breaking the law. PNR also allows the detection of crime that would not have been found using other data sets.

Some examples include:

- Chinese non-documented arrivals. On the basis of PNR data we have offloaded a number of passengers who were subsequently arrested all with forged documentation.
- A two week Semaphore trial on outbound passengers on a ferry route to France identified three suspected facilitators, two tobacco smugglers, one convicted sex offender and one individual under investigation by Kent police. Two forged documents were also identified.
- A passenger was matched by HMRC against one of their drugs courier profiles using essential PNR elements. An alert was sent to the Airline

Liaison Officer who intervened at embarkation. His reasons for travelling to the United Kingdom lacked credibility and he was referred to the local police who on searching his baggage discovered 25kgs of marijuana.

- Location of a murder suspect overseas by linking him to an associate's PNR record.
- Offloading of passengers attempting to smuggle (swallowed) drugs to the UK through PNR profiling.
- Identification of a significant number of facilitators and those using falsified documents through PNR profiling alerts.

We have of course run this pilot project in conformity with UK and EU data protection rules, and with involvement of our Information Commissioner.

Following the success of Semaphore, the UK intends to continue to implement our new borders system. We have this week signed the contract with a technology supplier to deliver the UK's e-Borders system. This will enable the routine acquisition and analysis of both API and PNR data, using our Joint Border operations centre. I would be more than happy to accommodate you or your officials if you wanted to see this technology first hand. I intend to send further examples of the successful use of PNR data, showing in more detail exactly why the PNR element in particular was crucial, in the coming months.

I'm copying this letter to Members of the JHA Council and to members of the LIBE Committee of the European Parliament.

MEG HILLIER