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# Light at the end of the tunnel?

**To address the issue of queues in airports, some pioneering Registered Travel Programs are already in use and are displaying huge potential. Has the time come for RTP's to take off?**

**A** Registered Travel Program (RTP) seeks to enroll travelers who willingly submit to extensive background checks and to the required biometrics data capture (digital photograph, iris and/or fingerprints) by their national security agencies.

Once accepted in the Registered Travel Program, travelers become eligible to speedier access either to security check and/or to border control in air and sea ports, via segregated "Fast Tracks", mostly using automated access control systems. When they enter the Fast Track, a

1:1 "live" biometric identification is performed against their electronic records, together with an updated query of their most recent security status in the government data bases before they are granted access.

Program operators are government agencies or qualified private companies. Enrolment is usually made on a yearly basis, often against payment, subject to discretionary revocation by the government agencies.

Several such programs are already operational in the

world. Some of them grew steadily over the years, like the UK IRIS, which counts over 200,000 enrollees and over 1,000,000 border crossings in several UK airports. In Holland, another large scale border crossing program, Privium, is operated by Schiphol's Amsterdam Airport, and uses automated turnstiles under remote supervision of border control officers. In the USA, the Clear program, privately operated under TSA's supervision, is focused as a "queue buster" to access the security checkpoint.

### RTP development

The development of a Frequent Traveler Program hinges upon its adoption and the perception of its payback by all parties involved: the traveling public, the government agencies and airports and airlines.

First, the travelers themselves: since tangible advantages are in hand, like expedited security procedures at checkpoint and/or border crossings using "Fast Tracks" with automated gates and portals, the public is likely to gradually adopt them, once the average user is familiar with the required sequence of operations. Endorsement could be further enhanced, should additional fringe benefits be offered on top of the previous departure differentiation, like priority treatment upon transit or arrival, using a special immigration lane open

to RTP members. This extra perk could be packaged by the arrival airport partner.

Second, the governments: tight control over the identity of the traveler by 1:1 biometric matching of the traveler is central to the process at each automated passage. By deploying automated border control for RTP members, governments could reallocate a sizeable portion of their most skilled immigration and customs officers and focus their activities on other higher risk passengers.

Third, other industry stakeholders may also reap fringe benefits from a successful outbound RT deployment. Airports and airlines could achieve accrued loyalty from satisfied departing travelers (accrued business at the various airport concessions, as well as recurring travel legs).

### Reasons to promote RTPs

There are several reasons to promote the adoption of Registered Traveler Programs.



Firstly, RTP's enable to split travelers into separate lanes, according to their assumed risk factor. The priority lanes will still be attractive to the registered users because of their attractive unobtrusiveness and throughput. In parallel, the redeployment of immigration and customs officers could closely overlay the topology layout of the various border control queues, promoting an improved monitoring of higher risk travelers and their belongings (drug traffickers, also).

Secondly, RTP's entice other industry stakeholders to take a more active part in the streamlining process. Airlines could pre-select potential Registered Travelers amongst their own frequent flyers (the

Two passengers leaving from neighboring gates from a major domestic US airport hub could easily swap boarding entitlements and destinations, one abroad and one in the US – an easy way to pile up undetected "overstays"

### Meet Jean Salomon

Jean Salomon is the principal of JS CP (Jean Salomon Consulting Partners). Prior to forming his consultancy he was with IER having joined them in 1986. Salomon was senior vice president in charge of strategic development at IER and he was also part of the core team working in IATA's SPTIG (Simplify Passenger Travel Interest Group), serving as an ISO expert in the ICAO's New Technology Working Group in charge of ePassport and eVisas, and is a regular speaker and moderator at various IATA and industry forums on related topics. Salomon is a chemical engineer and has a Ph.D. in Photochemistry. Prior to IER he worked at both IBM France and Elscint, and has also held various senior academic positions outside France.

French RT program, Pegase, was initiated at Charles De Gaulle by Air France under the control of French border police). Similarly, Amsterdam Privium members have access

Yes, by using a process which doesn't require initial enrolment!

Stripping the RTP concept to the bones, the program could use the travelers' own passport as single "key" to cross a border, if a 1:1 biometric matching is performed during the process.

Thus, ePassport owners could become eligible to use specific automated "Fast Tracks" with face recognition, where an on-the-fly photograph of the traveler's face would be matched against the face image contained in his ePassport, pending additional screening of the travelers ID against the local security databases at border crossing time.

This is precisely how Portugal has recently installed Rapid, an automated border crossing scheme, open to any EU citizen holding an ePassport: no enrolment is needed, and one border control officer can remotely supervise up to 5 parallel automatic immigration mantraps.

Sure enough, the RTP acronym got lost in the process! However, all standard RTP attributes and benefits were preserved in such a deployment!

## Any other bypass?

Yes, indeed, which involves visa seekers!

Nowadays, full biometrics capture at foreign consulates is part of the visa delivery process to all visitors from non visa waiver countries. The vetting process works like a background check performed remotely. Such a "temporary low risk" visitor will be further subject to a 1:1 biometric matching upon arrival, together with careful inspection of his passport and the granted temporary visa. Shouldn't these temporary, "quasi Registered Travelers" also use the same fast tracks?

## Two recent twists

Two major 2008 announcements from the US may have a significant impact on future RTP's success.

The first, in January, is the set up by DHS of an International Registered Travel (IRT) pilot trial in three US airports, to "allow for the expedited clearance of pre-approved low-risk air travelers into the United States". This pilot will initially be conducted at JFK,

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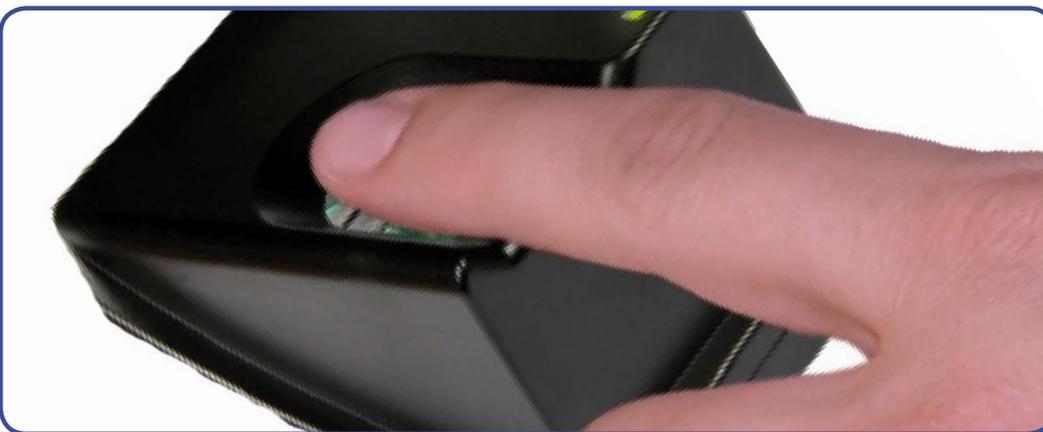
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to extended airport services such as nearby parking areas or airport lounges.

The third reason is that early data collection, knowledge and follow-up on travel habits of program members are part of the systematic cross-linked data searches and bilateral exchanges between the various security agencies responsible for fighting terror and organized crime.

**Could we develop streamlined border control procedures without an RTP?**

*TSA has mandated the collection of fingerprints of all air travelers departing from the USA as of June 2009*



Houston, and Washington Dulles, and should promote the development of bilateral agreements or simultaneous membership to several RTP programs internationally.

Much could be learned from this trial, especially with respect to scalability, interoperability and, for example, membership revocation, should one state change its mind about the eligibility of a given participant.

The second, in April, is a statement by which TSA has mandated the collection of fingerprints of all air travelers departing from the USA as of June 2009, thereby finally establishing border control procedures upon leaving the US. This is a very significant step in the right direction, since the lack of control while leaving the USA (both for natives and aliens) is a major security weakness.

The DHS has “volunteered” the airlines to become the prime operator to collect the biometrics for IRT’s. Deploying the right process and ramping up the collection of such sensitive material may prove to be trickier than expected for the airlines, which may end up reacting adversely to such an “imposed proposal”.

### Are we there, yet?

Unfortunately, both announcements are still not enough to



complement RTP’s, which are not a security panacea!

In the absence of mandatory document control during international/domestic boarding, ID substitution is very easy at major US carrier hubs, where inbound and outbound passenger traffic is largely intertwined. For example, two passengers leaving from neighboring gates from a major domestic US airport hub could easily swap boarding entitlements and destinations, one abroad and one in the US, an easy way to pile up undetected “overstays”!

Operational manpower freed by larger Registered Program deployments would be unable to prevent such malicious bypasses, unless significant process and infrastructure changes are further implemented to segregate traffic flow in airports and solve ID management issues at the boarding gates.

### The light at the end of the tunnel?

RTPs are the result of a no-nonsense security approach including mandatory early enrollment by the issuing control authorities. Such programs are best implemented in conjunction with frequent flyer or airport loyalty programs, and could be adapted to multi-modal transportation as well. They also fit into a specific niche of automated border crossing. There is a caveat, though: it is the program size itself.

As it is difficult to assess a priori who is a low risk traveler and even more difficult to ascertain that a given member remains a low risk traveler over time, large scale RTP development may eventually lead to a less favorable security process valuation by the issuing country itself. To reach an optimum, balance is needed as part of a layered security approach, where efficient dual way border control would be fully functional and Registered Traveler Programs remain only one of the border traffic feeders.

*By using a process which doesn't require initial enrolment, all ePassport owners could effectively mimic the “Registered Travelers” status and be eligible to use specific automated “Fast Tracks” where a live face image is compared to that stored in their ePassports*

