

BORDER SECURITY

Using Big Data To Spot High Risks

Firm: System Uses Travelers' Digital Markers

BY PIERRE TRAN
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PARIS — Zetiafox, a privately owned consulting firm, is working on a system to mine big data to help border security officers gauge travelers' risk factors, a critical task following recent deadly assaults in Brussels and Paris by Islamic State terrorists.

Agrave concern about border control has risen as attackers crossed national borders before staging bomb attacks that left dozens dead in the center of the two European capitals.

Border controls are so important that Britain performs a "security-related" check on all passport holders entering the country, a former senior intelligence officer said.

"The UK conducts security-related checks on the passports of every single individual, including all (European Union) citizens, entering the UK from continental Europe or elsewhere," Pauline Neville-Jones former chair of the Joint Intelligence Committee, said in a March 25 article in the Guardian daily



Passengers queue in front of a tent temporarily used as the entrance to the Brussels airport on April 4. The airport reopened the day before for the first time since two Islamic State terrorists blew themselves up in the departure hall on March 22.

Thierry Monasse/PRI/Getty Images

newspaper.

European border security and a lack of sharing of national intelligence have become sensitive political issues.

The Zetiafox directors say they have an algorithm that extends the predictive to the prescriptive, extending the function of what might happen to recommending the best action to take.

The consulting firm, founded by Patrick Zerbib and Marc Atallah, worked in late 2013 and early 2014 on a software-

driven simulator to demonstrate to a European national border agency a "smarter approach to raising the red flag," Atallah said.

Zerbib and Atallah developed the prescriptive approach when they were working with Deloitte, an auditing and consulting firm, he said.

Such a border security system allows a "profile" of a potential risk to be drawn by processing "overwhelming big data," Zerbib said. In the vast "data

lake" there is personal information based on elements such as credit cards, Facebook and Twitter social media accounts, and cellphones.

Data science seeks to spot high-risk profiles, he said. Once the data system flags a traveler, border officials can hold the suspect for questioning.

Frontex, the European Union border management agency, said April 6 in its 2016 risk analysis the three major challenges on the external borders were: "an unprecedented rise in migratory pressure, an increasing terrorist threat and a steady rise in the number of regular travelers."

In a presentation to Frontex, the then Zetiafox team within Deloitte set out the huge scale facing the European Union border management agency. Some 720 million air travelers are expected to be entering the Schengen Area by 2020 compared to 400 million in 2011. There are 1,800 border crossing points and 7,721 kilometers of land borders in the EU.

The consultants see interest among airlines, banks and insurance companies.

Zetiafox will be soon be seeking development capital of a few million euros to keep up with a high-growth market, Zerbib said. The venture capital would allow the company to speed up development and expand into new markets.

The company, which has offices in Paris and Washington, has set a six-month target to sign up one or more financial and business partners. DN

UAV CONTRACT

France Seals Deal for Safran Patroller Drone

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PARIS — France has signed a contract with Safran for 14 Patroller tactical UAVs for the French Army, with entry into service in 2018, the Defense Ministry and the aerospace and engine group said in separate statements.

Defense Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian attended during his visit to the Safran plant (Safran group) at Montluçon the contract signing for the tactical drone system by the deputy director of the Direction Générale de l'Armement and the chief executive of Safran, "the ministry said.

The contract for the Patroller UAV, including 12 years of maintenance, is worth some €300 million (US\$417 million), French media have reported.

A ministerial investment committee backed a pick in January by the Army and DGA of the Safran Patroller, which beat a competing offer of the Watchkeeper from Thales, a defense systems company.

"The competition was very strictly conducted jointly by DGA and the Army, which I welcome," Le Drian said in prepared remarks. Flying tests were conducted in the summer to compare the two competing products.

"Finally and without any doubt, it was the Patroller which showed itself better able to meet the Army's needs, particularly its electro-optical capability, endurance and capacity to fly over domestic territory," he said.

The Patroller is "made in France," with 85 percent of content from French

suppliers, including mainly small and medium-sized companies in the 25-strong Patroller Cluster group, he said.

The program will create 300 highly qualified jobs, not only at Montluçon but also at other sites around the country.

Job creation is a key issue, in view of stubbornly high unemployment of some 10 percent and presidential elections due to be held next year. Montluçon is in the Auvergne region, central France, which contains the constituency of President François Hollande, who has pledged to cut the jobless rate.

"If the Patroller is sold in exports — and I believe certain countries have already shown interest — other jobs will be created," Le Drian said.

Sagem CEO Martin Son said: "Several countries have already expressed

their interest in the Patroller, especially in Asia and the Middle East."

Thales had pledged to boost French content to 50 percent from 10 percent on the Watchkeeper, daily Le Monde reported. That tactical UAV is based on the Elib Hermes 450 and is built in Britain by a joint venture held 49 percent by Thales and 51 percent by Elib.

The contract includes two ground stations and communications for flying the drones, two training stations, and support systems, the ministry said. The UAV will be equipped to carry two payloads on each flight, initially comprising both an electro-optical/infrared/laser capability and a radar, followed later by a signals intelligence system while taking off the radar.

The UAV, capable of flying for 20 hours and up to 20,000 feet, is based on the ES-15 aircraft from German partner Ecuars. There is to be capability for manned flight. DN