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IT & TECHNOLOGY

# THE BIOMETRIC FUTURE



Travel safely wherever you like while securing your personal information and securing your identity. Technology is now able to guarantee that those who need to know, know what they need to about you.

Anas Chbib, Managing Director of AGT, Advanced German Technology, talks about a world with security that could benefit everyone.

**WHAT IS THE CURRENT STATE OF BIOMETRICS AND INFORMATION SECURITY?**

What is being looked at now is a computer chip inside your passport. As soon as it's scanned all the data on the passport will appear on a screen within two or three seconds. The Americans are asking the European community to put this biometric inside the passport. Another thing being done in Zurich is face recognition software to monitor illegal immigration. Your face can't change, with a beard or without one, whatever; the camera is looking at your bones, which cannot be so easily changed. As soon as you arrive at the airport a camera can be monitoring your face without you even realizing, your passport picture can then be scanned when you reach passport control – with or without the biometric chip – and the two images are compared.

**HOW MIGHT THIS BE DONE WITHOUT THE CHIP?**

If you want to check someone that is coming to

It's very important for a country like Egypt with a huge number of tourists every year; Arab and non-Arab tourists. Everybody who is coming in won't have to wait at all – think about Luxor and Aswan and how fast things would move. Every government in the Middle East is exploring the benefits of tourism and whatever way you can guarantee coming to your country will be easier and friendlier for them is good. There is a lot of competition from Malaysia, Turkey, Tunisia and Croatia for European tourists. You need to offer such services – the Pyramids will not be enough if you have to wait hours in a queue and pass through five or six security checks. It doesn't have to be this inefficient with the appropriate use of this technology. It doesn't have to be difficult for Europeans to get visa's – you should be able to purchase it with your ticket or on the plane maybe with an extra charge for the luxury, but making life easier. This is something that countries worry about for their national security, no country wants to compromise their security, this means you have to use the maximum security technology you have with convenience – you need to know who is coming and going and when and so on, but at the same time make it as easy as possible for all involved and give people the chance to smile and say 'welcome to Egypt.'

**WHAT OTHER WAYS CAN THIS SORT OF TECHNOLOGY BE USED?**

We have introduced a machine that can check for drugs and explosives. It's similar to the hand held ones that check for metal. It is being used in some airports, though you wouldn't know it because part of the strategy is not to show that you have 1000 machines and 500 people to check everyone. The more complicated things get, the better the technology has to be to fight the 'bad boys' – how can someone searching your person know if you have anything in your shoes? Why should the extra technology only be applied at Heathrow or JFK? Why not in Egypt? It's just as important to protect Egypt's interests – we don't want any problems, the areas that can be made very secure should be even



**WOULD APPLYING THIS TECHNOLOGY ATTRACT PEOPLE TO EGYPT?**

We must look at this also as a marketing tool, there are all kinds of hassles in airports all over the world - imagine if Cairo can announce quick, easy and secure entry to Egypt. Not just for foreigners, for Egyptians too. If the Egyptian passport is written by hand, and cannot have all these features, then we slowly but surely change the passport. The people who have the electronic passport will benefit from the ease and security of it, those that don't will have to upgrade for say 150 instead of 100 pounds, you would not say no. So the new passport will be financed by the extra charge. Especially in the Middle East – people are looking for convenience, maybe not every single person will pay for it, but the people who use the airlines will be happy too, consider Omra for example.

**HOW IS AGT CURRENTLY INVOLVED IN BIOMETRIC SOLUTIONS?**

We are a system integrator, we look to the needs of the client, the vision and the strategy and we put these components together. You might find 28 different types of facial recognition software, one for



chip of the passport and the biometric chip – and the two images are compared.

#### HOW MIGHT THIS BE DONE WITHOUT THE CHIP?

If you want to check everyone that is coming to your country, like Egypt for example, if you would like to have more tourists – but how can we do this without sacrificing security? First of all secure the national passport, to make sure that with a fingerprint, face recognition and the bar code etc. The information can be compared and no chip is necessary. The next step is to have your fingerprint and picture on this chip itself, so this can also be compared and used whenever you visit other countries that can also record and check your information.

When foreigners visit and you want them to pass quickly through immigration, but at the same time don't want to admit any risks, using more technology can do this. The German or the British passport are very safe and secure – the minute they come in, you place the passport on the scanner, and you will be presented with all the features of the passport, all that persons details, so nothing needs to be typed, no forms need to be filled in, you don't need an extra person to check the passport; the minute you come in 'Hello, how are you? How was your flight?' At the same time the information is being confirmed and if anything is wrong the immigrations officer is immediately alerted and can ask the visitor to step to one side. If it's a matter regarding security, the data bank can be logged in and connected to Interpol, the CIA, or Scotland Yard – whoever you want.

#### HOW USEFUL IS THIS TO EGYPT WITH SO MANY TOURISTS?

anything in your airport. Why should the extra technology only be applied at Heathrow or JFK? Why not in Egypt? It's just as important to protect Egypt's interests – we don't want any problems, the areas that can be made very secure should be, even though this will need a big investment.

#### HOW MIGHT FUNDS FOR SUCH A PROJECT BE GENERATED?

You can 're-finance' such a thing, if a visa is fifteen euros, and there are one or two or three million tourists a year to Egypt – if everybody paid another three euros for the next five or ten years, you can finance all this security for your country. I'm sure that the government has ideas about improving airport security in general and many investors are interested, if there is also feedback from the public then they may really want it – it's in your interest and mine, simply feeling safe, knowing that only 'good people' are being allowed in gives society as a whole a boost - an individual's security is in the interests of national security.

#### WHAT OTHER KINDS OF SOLUTIONS ARE AVAILABLE?

We also present some solutions where you can scan cars. If Cairo wants to have a special fee for cars in specific areas, because of the environment you might not want the cars to come in – In India, no industrial sites are to be built within 60 km of the Taj Mahal and no cars within 3 km, except specific cars. A small chip and sensor in the car can monitor its activities and charge the driver extra fees depending on where they go to be paid when they renew their registration. It becomes very easy to do border control checks with such technology by matching up the license plate with data on the chip.

#### BIOMETRIC SOLUTIONS?

We are a system integrator, we look to the needs of the client, the vision and the strategy and we put these components together. You might find 28 different types of facial recognition software, one for African faces, Chinese, European and so on. Different cameras and data banks, systems that only look at your visa, such as the Hajj visa. So what we do is put the state of the art technology and the latest research together to provide the client with solutions that they choose from and then we implement it. We see it as a complete solution, the software and the hardware and the know-how for it to evolve - as well as support and maintain the solution. We have about 35 technology partners in German, so we are able to do big projects, put all the components together and present them for the client to decide if they want to develop any themselves and decide on others for us to develop if they want.

#### AND WHAT ELSE?

I hope that we will have better awareness, particularly amongst young people growing up with this technology around them. I know there are a lot of Hackers in Egypt, and these hackers could be very good consultants for such companies. If computer clubs can be put together, as in Germany, from which businesses can draw talent and utilize their know-how in the right direction, I think we can do a lot. If universities in Cairo would start concentrating in this direction, on how to protect our national security... Access control for banks and telecom companies, border management and control, identification security and another area; how to secure my data, personal data that should be protected.

Wael Elazab

