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The Lady Saltoun of Abernethy
House of Lords
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2⁸ March 2009

Dear Lady Saltoun,

Privacy and Government databases

I am writing further to my answer on privacy and Government databases at Parliamentary Questions on 25 March to address some points that I did not cover at the time.

You highlighted an article in the *Telegraph* on 14 March and queried whether the Government is planning to introduce a database to log the details of all trips made abroad by anyone in the UK. You also asked whether individuals will need to apply for permission before travelling, giving a complete and detailed itinerary, e-mail address and credit card details.

The database you have referred to is associated with the e-Borders Programme, which is a key component of the Government's wider strategy to strengthen and modernise border controls. It is designed to complement the UK counter terrorism strategy and will establish an intelligence led border control and security framework, based on electronic processing of information relating to all travellers to and from the UK for all modes of transport.

The purpose of e-Borders is to collect and analyse passenger, crew and service data provided by air, maritime and rail carriers in respect of all journeys to and from the United Kingdom in advance of travel. E-Borders will provide the capability to risk assess all future passengers and where necessary intervene against those considered to be high risk. The underlying aim of e-Borders is to provide greater consistency via a single point of notification.

Legislation puts the onus on carriers and owner/operators of all vessels, rather than travellers themselves, due to arrive in or depart from the UK to submit electronically detailed passenger data to the e-Borders system prior to travel. This information will be derived by the carriers from the machine-readable zone (MRZ) of suitably equipped travel documents.

There is no question of passengers having to apply for permission to travel, nor will they be required to submit an itinerary. The other points you raise on e-mail and credit card details are described as Other Passenger Information (OPI) which carriers will only be required to provide to e-Borders to the extent that it is known to them, i.e. held within the reservation system or departure control systems. This may include, for example, date and place of reservation and ticket issue, method of payment and baggage details. Full details of the information to be collected have been outlined in Schedule 1 to The Immigration and Police (Passenger, Crew and Service Information) Order 2008, which came into effect on 1 March 2008.

The e-Borders programme is in the process of being rolled out. The programme will capture 60 per cent of all passenger and crew movements by December 2009, 95 per cent by December 2010 and all passengers by 2014. Information is currently only collected from air carriers.

Travellers will not have to do anything that they do not already do, with the possible exception of providing their passport details to the carrier when booking. This is already captured by many carriers because of the requirement to provide this information to a range of countries, including USA, Canada, Spain, Cyprus, Australia, New Zealand, Mexico and Saudi Arabia.

I hope you find this information useful. I am placing a copy of this letter in the Library.

Yours Sincerely,

WILLY BACH