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NOTE

from :	United Kingdom delegation
to :	Strategic Committee on Immigration, Frontiers and Asylum
Subject :	Centre of Excellence at Dover - Mobile Detection Unit

1. The project is addressed to all Member States, and the UK would welcome partners to work with us. The project is for a centre of excellence in detection technology, to be based at Dover, and the deployment of such technology at strategic points on the EU external border.

2. Illegal immigration, and in particular clandestine immigration, continues to thrive as an 'industry' and pose a threat to the integrity of the external EU frontier. The UK is not alone in having seen a significant increase in the numbers found either attempting to gain entry by clandestine means, or who have succeeded in doing so.

3. Such large-scale illegal movement not only creates pressure on immigration controls, and therefore the resources of the border agencies of the relevant Member States, but there are also security implications regarding potential terrorist threats, and issues of large-scale smuggling and organised crime. As would-be migrants become increasingly desperate in their search for a better life, and people smuggling becomes a highly lucrative business, so traffickers are becoming increasingly resourceful and adept at evading immigration controls. Concealment in a vehicle is no longer the action of an opportunist jumping in the back of whatever lorry happens to come along, unbeknown to the driver. The UK has seen evidence of carefully planned and organised concealment with specially modified vehicles including pipes to release carbon dioxide to evade detection.

4. Manual searching of vehicles has proved to no longer be an effective tool in the detection of these clandestine entrants and technology based search solutions provide an effective and efficient solution to the identification of clandestine entrants concealed in vehicles. The UK is committed to the use of cutting-edge technology to secure borders against clandestine entry, and we have therefore developed a strategic layered deployment of a number of specific technologies to detect illegal immigrants in vehicles.

5. There are four means of detecting clandestine entrants in vehicles that employ the deployment of technology-based solutions :

   - Carbon dioxide detectors, these identify levels of carbon dioxide in the load space of a vehicle through the employment of a probe inserted through the side of the covering.

   - Heart beat detectors, these employ seismic technology to detect the minute movement in a vehicle caused by heartbeats.

   - X/gamma ray scanners, these produce high quality images and can be used on all types of vehicle to search for clandestine entrants or contraband.

   - Passive Millimetric Wave Imaging, this equipment uses a type of thermal imaging system and is capable of detecting clandestine entrants in soft-sided vehicles whilst they are in motion.

6. The UK has a great deal of expertise in the use of New Detection Technology, having worked closely with ferry operators, other Member States and manufacturers. A wealth of knowledge and experience has been created which could be utilised for the benefit of the EU.

7. The UK proposes to create a centre of excellence in the field of search and detection technology. This would be based at the port of Dover, where we already have a unit that manages the deployment of our existing technology. The new centre would be responsible for the managed deployment of a mobile team operating a range of equipment at vulnerable access points along the external EU border. This would be subject to needs identified by intelligence colleagues. The UK would also provide operating staff, as our contribution to the overall cost, and invite other Member States to contribute staff to the team. The activities of the team would be closely monitored by the centre in Dover, with results analysed on a regular basis and reported back to the Commission and other Member States through SCIFA+.

8. There are five main routes across Europe where New Detection Technology could be deployed to prevent people smuggling/clandestine entry into the European Union

   - Baltic Route: Moscow-Baltic States-Poland-Czech Republic-Austria/Germany
   - Central Route: Ukraine-Poland/Slovakia/Hungary/Czech Republic-Austria/Germany
   - Eastern Mediterranean Route: Middle East - Greece/Italy
   - North African Route: North Africa - Spain/Italy
   - Balkan Route: Turkey - Balkan States - Italy/Austria

9. The UK is aware that some of these routes are already covered by detection technology. It nevertheless seems likely that there is a need to have the capacity for the deployment of such technology at other vulnerable points on the external border not covered by existing arrangements, and to be able to respond quickly and effectively to trends and changes in the routes used by smugglers. The UK therefore proposes a flexible unit, able to deploy its expertise as required. The UK also invites Member States to provide further details of vulnerable routes/areas.

10. At the Seville European Council in June, the Presidency called for Member States to attach top priority to a series of measures in the field of immigration and asylum, following on from the programme laid out at Tampere. These fall largely into 3 categories; measures to combat illegal immigration, management of the external border, and relations with third countries. To aid Member States in this the Presidency also produced a road-map detailing work areas and progress already made. Our proposal ties in with point 7 of the road-map, joint operations at borders, and general management of the external border.

11. The UK also suggests that the information gathered as part of Finland's risk assessment project could be used to identify those points where detection technology could be most effectively deployed. In addition we suggest that by forming a team from several Member States to deploy the technology, this project could complement Germany's proposal on co-operation of border control agencies, and the proposal from Greece on evaluating risks arising from illegal immigration at the Eastern external land borders.

12. The UK intends to ask for co-financing of this project under the ARGO programme.

13. If the above-mentioned project is adopted the UK would aim to establish a centre in Dover with the capacity to deploy New Detection Technology at strategic points on the EU external border in within the next six months.

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