

## AFFAIRS OF THE NATION



## EU/US JOINT SURVEILLANCE?

UNITED STATES proposals requiring tourists to submit social media data as part of its Electronic System for Travel Authorisation applications has seen quite the brouhaha in the Irish media and much comment from Irish politicians. But there has been no media analysis of controversial EU proposals to expand travel surveillance. Will this come to a head during Ireland's presidency of the EU Council later this year?

In December US Customs and Border Protection outlined that not only would the details of five years' social media activity be required from travellers but phone numbers or email addresses used in the same time period would have to be provided. The agency is also looking to gather visitors' face, fingerprint, DNA and iris biometrics, as well as the names, addresses, birth dates and birth places of family members, including children.

Taoiseach Micheál Martin dismissed the proposals as "not workable", claiming they would lead to "log jams everywhere". Yet when Ireland holds the EU presidency this year, it will have to progress controversial proposals to increase surveillance of passengers using ships and travelling interstate on long-distance rail and bus journeys.

In 2016 the EU introduced the Passenger Name Record (PNR) Directive, requiring airlines to provide police forces with passengers' names, addresses, flight information, travel itinerary, payment data, baggage information and in-flight meal choices. The directive detailed how this data could be checked against police databases using algorithms.

The European Commission will issue an evaluation of the directive next summer and it is in this context that the proposals developed under the Danish presidency will be considered. These proposals outline that data would be gathered in relation to rail, bus and sea passengers in a similar way to air

travel. A working group is also looking at the surveillance of car journeys by authorising the sharing of data gathered by automated number plate recognition systems.

Under consideration too is expanding the uses for this data. Originally under the PNR Directive, the information could only be used to investigate serious criminal or terrorist offences but the new proposals argue that, due to "operational and practical issues", the legal basis for the use of data needs to be expanded.

In recent years the EU has signed bilateral agreements to share PNR data with Iceland, Norway, Canada, Australia, the US, Britain and, most recently, Switzerland. In a Dáil debate late last month regarding the Swiss agreement, Sinn Féin's Matt Carthy did not oppose the proposal but he did claim that, among the public, "there is no awareness that we are travelling in the direction of handing more and more powers over to the European Union, with little rationale in some instances. There is no discussion of the far-reaching implications of handing over increased powers in the areas of freedom, security and justice."



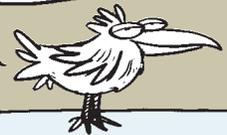
Gary Gannon

The Social Democrats' Gary Gannon echoed this sentiment, saying his "concern is not specific to Switzerland; it is about accumulation. Each individual opt-in looks modest and technical. Taken together, however, these measures expand the reach of surveillance gradually, often without sustained public debate. Again, that is not an argument against co-operation but an argument for vigilance."

Parallel to the discussions regarding the expansion of the PNR Directive, EU ministers have agreed to open negotiations with the US to grant access to information in EU states' police databases to US officials, with the EU having reciprocal access to data held by US agencies. The US is linking this demand to European countries having access to the visa-free travel programme.

In the last week of January European Commission officials flew to Washington for the first round of negotiations, which aim to establish a framework for bilateral agreements with member states called Enhanced Border Security Partnerships. US officials have indicated that they expect these agreements should be concluded during the Irish presidency. The US wants access to biometric and sensitive personal data of "travellers necessary to determine whether a traveller's entry or stay would pose a risk to public security or public order".

THE HOT AIR BRIGADE



I gave them to some friends of mine to read and they cried. They couldn't believe how lovely people were. People had said in the cards, 'Here's a fiver, get yourself a coffee' or 'Here's a pack of jellies, I know you love sweets'. **Ryan Tubridy**



Ryan Tubridy

**Tubridy on the public response to his exit from RTÉ, Irish Independent**

We pride ourselves on being next-moment focused and being present to what's in front of our face. **Irish coach Andy Farrell at the launch of the Six Nations tournament, Irish Times, submitted by reader**

The Cream Tonal colourway is neutral, chic and understated. Perfect for the conscious consumer, this colour is a subtle style choice. Take your Cream Tonal Stanley into the office or library with you for hydration on the go; the ultimate functional accessory. **Brown Thomas Magazine on, er, matching your water bottle to your personality**

Vogue Williams says that having Dermot Bannon offer advice on her home was one of the highlights of her TV career. **Niamh Walsh, Irish Mail on Sunday**

It felt like the organisation was wagging its finger at me, saying 'you've been a bad person – you need to have a pay cap to stop your gallop'. **Claire Byrne on her €250,000 pay cap at RTÉ, Irish Independent**

Comfort and style always matter to the average French man, even when he's taking out the bins. **Aoife Dunican, Business Post**

By the time brand strategist Dee Corcoran takes the floor to facilitate a personal vision board, outlining our intentions for the year, there's a rhythm to the room. **Vickie Maye on Lesley Giltinan's Radiance weekend at Castlemartyr Resort, Irish Examiner**

We now know that the gut's microbiota – think a trampolining conference of beneficial bacteria inside our large intestine – plays a Nobel prize-winning role in both physical and in mental health. **Susan Jane White, Irish Independent**

All I would say to the people of Ireland is, 'Please don't believe the stuff you read about me'. *Lord of the Dance* is the greatest show in the world, and we will prove it this coming Thursday. **Michael Flatley, Sunday Independent Life Magazine**

A black labrador welcomed the guests and, despite all the A-listers present, the atmosphere was friendly from the off, with people smiling around at each other, the barriers down. **Mary McCarthy on attending Jilly Cooper's memorial, Irish Independent**

Please send suitable contributions to: The Hot Air Brigade, The Phoenix, 44 Lr Baggot St, Dublin 2 or email: hotair@thephoenix.ie



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