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The Science and Technology (S&T) Directorate is an arm of the Department of Homeland Security which has the responsibility and mandate to conduct research aimed at improving homeland security by applying the latest technologies. The applications of science and technology developed at S&T are marketed at its clients who include federal, state and territorial emergency officials and responders. Homeland Security Presidential Directive 24 (HSPD 24)

Establishes a framework to ensure that Federal executive departments and agencies use mutually compatible methods and procedures in the collection, storage, use, analysis, and sharing of biometric and associated biographic and contextual information of individuals in a lawful and appropriate manner, while respecting their information privacy and other legal rights under United States law (Department of Homeland Security 2008) This research paper aims to discuss the specifics of this directive, its potential impact on homeland security and explains threat, vulnerability and criticality assessment in the context of HSPD 24.

Specifics of HSPD 24 HSPD 24 lays a foundation for ensuring that Federal and state executives and agencies employ compatible methods and procedures while collecting, using, analyzing and sharing biometric and biographic information of people in lawful, ethical and appropriate approaches so as to respect individual and information privacy and any other rights legally recognized under U. S. law (DHS 2008). This directive defines biometrics as the measurable anatomical, physiological and behavioral characteristics attributable to an individual.

Such may include fingerprints, facial and iris recognition. It also covers for interoperability, the situation where organs within the security apparatus can mutually exchange information, and use the information to undertake security operations. Impact of HSPD 24 on Homeland Security HSPD 24 is intended to increase the capacity of security agencies to identify “known and suspected terrorists” while providing a Federal framework for the application of existing biometric technologies as well as the upgrading of biometric information collection systems in line with emerging related technologies.

Since the terrorist attack on the twin towers on September 11th 2001, there was a need to increase the capacity of identifying individuals who pose a threat to national security. The collection and storage of biometric information in a database accessible to all security agencies (DHS 2008) is therefore crucial for the protection of American citizens as it makes the tracking of criminal suspects and terrorists more efficient. International criminals can be identified before entry into the nation, and the system also forms a base for more applicable crime-scene investigations since evidence can be linked to perpetrators of crime.

Explanation of Threat, Vulnerability, and Criticality Assessment in the context of Homeland Security and HSPD 24 By definition in this context, a threat is a situation, condition, object, an individual which or who is a source of danger. A threat can also be defined as the declaration of a plan to harm. Threats to national security therefore include terrorism, violent crime, drug trafficking and robbery. Vulnerability in this case is the state or measure of the state to which a nation or its citizens are susceptible to crime.

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Its dimensions may include physical, social and economic vulnerability.

Criticality assessment is an evaluation concerned with the identification of assets, infrastructure and other resources that sustain security agencies, their operatives and their activities and are considered to be of prime importance for the success of a mission. Criticality assessment addresses the impact that a temporary or permanent failure or loss of such resources will have on the functionality of a security unit and its ability to perform its duties.

Time and cost of a recovery of security infrastructure in case of temporary or permanent loss of infrastructure or resources is also considered in this assessment. Biometrics for Identification and Screening to Enhance National Security: A Review In my opinion, HSPD 24 is a very essential component in the war against crime as it provides a working platform for almost all other crime prevention endeavors. Once accurate biometric information is collected and shared between security agencies, the movement of criminals can be easily tracked.

The implementation of this directive also complements routine security measures like airport passenger and luggage screening. Once accurate biometric information is available in databases accessible to security agencies, evidence collected from crime scenes can be used to track crime suspects and implement justice. It therefore ranks higher than most other directives, especially specific ones like Homeland Security Presidential Directive 19: Combating Terrorist Use of Explosives in the United States since it creates the framework form which they can operate efficiently.

Conclusion

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With international and domestic terrorism becoming an increasing threat to national security, there needs to be elaborate mechanisms of preventing it. Technology keeps on changing, and criminals have a knack for using the latest technologies to commit crimes and then cover their tracks. Security operatives therefore need to be ahead of them; and HSPD 24 is one of the ways they can. The creation of an elaborate database of biometric information will not only aid in identifying and tracking criminals, it will also dissuade potential criminals since they will realize it is hard for them to escape authorities after committing crimes.

References

Department of Homeland Security, DHS (2008) *Homeland Security Presidential Directive*

24: Biometrics for Identification and Screening to Enhance National Security.

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