While negative publicity and heightened sensitivities arose from the Mossad incident, the truth is that such incidents validate the concerns of the Passport Office for stringent and continuously improving security measures. The five-year design cycle for our passport enables us to periodically review our document and apply new technologies to deter assaults. We have taken the approach of "lessons learned", and we plan to apply superior technology and enhanced security in our communications, and test the security aspects of the issuing process.

This year has been a politically sensitive one when it came to security, but this is also perhaps a warning sign as we enter into the new millennium, with its increased international travel, expanded global business, and a growing world population, a warning sign that these security precautions are not in vain. Security is not only provided for the country, but also for the traveller in a far-off land, who can enjoy the feeling of protection and service that the document represents.

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The Israeli security agency Mossad has been caught previously using Canadian documents despite a 1981 bilateral agreement that such activities would not be carried out and a 1992 request from the Canadian government that such operations be curtailed after revelations in a book authored by a former Mossad agent.

The Passport Office, as the passport agent of the Government of Canada, is responsible for taking the lead on this commitment. Planning activities must take into account the changing pressures and demands placed upon our document design, and the related issuing procedures and policies, by a burgeoning smuggling community.

The technologies applied in the design of the passport need to remain at the forefront. While the design is extremely resistant to alteration, recent experience has demonstrated that the threat against any design is persistent and relentless. It is essential that the Passport Office maintain competent research, intelligence and network capabilities to ensure the wisest application of technological advances in document security.

We have continued to work closely with international organizations interested in security issues, such as the International Standards Organization (ISO) and the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO). In February 1997, we attended the Facilitation meeting of ICAO held in Montreal. We seized the occasion to press upon ICAO member states the need not only to intercept fraudulent travel documents but to actually surrender the seized documents to the States purported to be the issuers of such documents, so that relevant investigations can be undertaken.

The new passport issuing software is currently being tested and reviewed for security. Problems encountered have undergone revision and the next version has been created. Special functional/operational requirements were tested and further work needs to be done before this software can be released. Connectivity between the Passport Office and the Consular Management & Operations System (COSMOS) is being tested, and many security issues have arisen regarding the soundness of the connection. In the next year, a pilot system will be tested, with the hope that the electronic transfer will be enhanced for improved passport