

## 8. The Strategic Relevance of Passport Office Data Resources

As the role of the PPO expands in the 90's to support international security issues, and as the data bases of the PPO are set up with more comprehensive and accessible information, these data resources may themselves become of strategic importance to the government. The possibility of this occurrence is real, given the expected widespread growth and acceptance, and expectations of managers, of on-line systems and networks.

The issue is important to consider as an entity in itself, resulting in focus and planning for the design of the data base as a potentially shareable resource rather than simply a support for PPO operations. There is an important distinction between the perceived uses and the resulting design of the two scenarios.

If international pressures for security result in the requirement for on-line passport authentication, perhaps at least at Canadian borders with an Immigration rather than Customs focus, and for Canadians travelling out of Canada, then the PPO will undoubtedly be involved in restricted on-line access to its files for passport number, base data, and picture/signature data on request. Such operation would represent a significant new role for the PPO function and data resources.

The new data bases may become of interest to governments in other areas as well. For example, a close (2-way) association with police files may become expected, as could common application with Immigration. Equally important to consider are limited access rights, bilateral, with certain political allies such as the USA and the UK. Although it is difficult to imagine a wholesale sharing of data files with foreign countries, it is not inconceivable that certain countries (or perhaps even the UN) sponsor a shared access data hub for international authentication of passports for citizens of member countries. Similarly, international airlines may also be interested in data access. Current and forthcoming technologies will make such data sharing possible. The PPO should design its future data base resources with such possibilities in mind, so as to facilitate such programs as they arise, or even suggest them.

The issue of data privacy must be raised in such considerations. Certainly if a trend can be detected in the early 90's it is that individuals are becoming more sensitive