PHL to Conduct Pilot Program for Biometric Exit Screening Technologies
Test of three types of screening devices for select outbound international flights begins Jan. 21

PHILADELPHIA – Beginning January 21, 2020, Philadelphia International Airport (PHL) will implement a 45-day pilot of biometric screening technologies at three international gates to help U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) process departing passengers. Biometric screening is designed to verify travelers' identities by cross-checking facial scans with photos already on file with the federal government. CBP has been mandated by federal law to use biometric exit screenings for foreign nationals (excluding Canadian citizens who don't require a visa to enter the U.S. and diplomatic and government visa holders).

"We are excited to welcome this new technology to the airport," said PHL Airport CEO Chellie Cameron. "Working with our partners at CBP and our airlines will ensure our continued dedication to safety and security." As a partner to CBP, PHL will install equipment to capture facial images of travelers exiting the U.S. CBP will install the system for travelers entering the country.

The test of three types of biometric systems, veriScan, NEC and SITA, will be conducted at gates A15, A16 and A17 for select outbound international flights on Qatar, British Airways, Lufthansa and American Airlines. As per CBP, "travelers who do not wish to participate in this facial comparison process may notify a CBP Officer or an airline or airport representative in order to seek an alternative means of verifying their identities and documents." CBP discards all photos of U.S. citizens within 12 hours of identity verification.

The pilot program includes a device like an iPad or tablet, mounted on boarding gate kiosks. As a passenger walks towards the biometric scanner, the facial recognition device will scan their face and compare it to a database. If the face matches, the machine will clear the passenger.

PHL's biometric exit technologies pilot will also include the first-ever test of digital instruction signs. The Synectecmedia ReadySeeGo digital signage totems will display multimedia, bilingual content to create passenger awareness of the biometric cameras and provide instructions for their use. The bilingual digital signs are expected to increase effectiveness and engagement during the screening process by facilitating passenger flow and decreasing the need for gate agents to use the passenger address system.

After the pilot program is complete, an analysis will be conducted through May 1 to determine which technology performed best. Full implementation could take up to one year.

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