



Guidelines for the access to, use, and disclosure of passenger name record (PNR) data

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Plain language summary

Target audience: CBSA personnel, commercial air carriers, travellers

Key content: Administrative guidelines on the access, use, and disclosure of PNR information within the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA), as well as information regarding access and correction requests for this data.

Keywords: PNR, prescribed information, data access, data use, data disclosure.

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Updates made to this D-memo

This memorandum has been revised to solely reflect information pertaining to PNR. Advance Passenger Information (API), Interactive API (IAPI), and pre-departure Air Exit information can be found in [Memorandum D2-7-1](#).

Guidelines

1. PNR is the air transport industry term for reservation and departure control records created by air carriers or their agents for each journey booked by or on behalf of any passenger. This data is used by air carriers for their own business purposes

and depending upon the underlying transactions and systems responsible for the booking, may contain information including basic identity data about the traveller and their itinerary; contact, payment and billing information; information about the travel agent that made the booking; check-in status; and seat and baggage information.

2. For inbound flights, the CBSA collects a limited set of PNR data relating to all passengers seeking entry into Canada. However, the CBSA does not require any carrier to collect or provide additional elements that they do not already collect for their own business purposes.

Note: PNR data is not collected for outbound flights.

3. Pursuant to paragraph 269(4) of the [Immigration and Refugee Protection Regulations \(IRPR\)](#) and paragraph 7(2) of the [Passenger Information \(Customs\) Regulations \(PICR\)](#), commercial air carriers are required to provide the prescribed PNR information at the flight's time of departure from the last place persons boarded the conveyance before arriving in Canada. Only one submission of PNR information is required.
4. The requirement to provide PNR is outlined in subsection 5(e) of the [PICR](#) and paragraph 269(1)(e) of the [IRPR](#).

Operational use of PNR data

5. The use of PNR is strictly limited in law. As set out in section 4 of the [Protection of Passenger Information Regulations \(PPIR\)](#), PNR data may be used by authorized CBSA personnel only for the following purposes:
 - a. to identify persons who have or may have committed a terrorism offence or a serious transnational crime or
 - b. to conduct trend analysis or develop risk indicators for the purpose of identifying persons who have or may have committed a terrorism offence or a serious transnational crime

6. Section 1 of the [PPIR](#) defines “terrorism offence” and “serious transnational crime” for the purpose of the permitted uses discussed above.
7. In brief, it defines “terrorism offence” as an act or omission committed "in whole or in part for a political, religious or ideological purpose, objective or cause" with the intention of intimidating the public “with regard to its security, including its economic security”, or “compelling a person, a government or a domestic or an international organization to do or to refrain from doing any act." Activities recognized within this context include death and bodily harm with the use of violence; endangering a person’s life; risking the health and safety of the public; significant property damage; and interference or disruption of essential services, facilities or systems. This includes conspiracy, attempt, or threat to commit such an act or omission, or being an accessory after the fact or counselling in relation to any such act or omission. The definition also includes knowingly participating in or contributing to a terrorist group for any of the above purposes or providing material or financial support to such a group. Readers should refer to the [PPIR](#) for a complete definition of this term.
8. The [PPIR](#) defines “serious transnational crime” as an act or omission that constitutes an offence that is punishable in Canada by a term of imprisonment of at least four years and is committed:
 - a. in more than one country
 - b. in only one country but a substantial part of its preparation, planning, direction or control takes place in another country
 - c. in only one country but an organized criminal group that engages in criminal activities in more than one country is implicated in the act or omission
 - d. in only one country but has substantial effects in another country or
 - e. in a country other than Canada but the offender intends to travel to or transit through Canada
9. Examples of serious transnational crimes include, but are not limited to:
 - a. narcotics smuggling
 - b. human smuggling
 - c. human trafficking and

- d. importation or smuggling of child pornography

Access to PAXIS

10. PNR Information is stored in the Passenger Information System (PAXIS). Pursuant to Treasury Board policy and the CBSA's Directive for Access Control in Information Systems, access to PAXIS is restricted according to the "need-to-know" and "least privilege" principles. This means that users will only be granted access to PAXIS where it is required in order for the user to perform their assigned duties, and that the user will be assigned a profile with the minimum access permissions required to fulfill said duties.
11. Certain PAXIS user profiles provide access to PNR information. These profiles are assigned mainly to targeting and intelligence personnel who require them to perform assigned duties or functions which are clearly linked to the identification of persons who have or may have committed a terrorism offence or serious transnational crime as set out in the [PPIR](#). A limited number of profiles are assigned exclusively for program compliance.
12. PAXIS access requests are submitted through the IT Self-service Portal. All access requests must be approved by the user's immediate supervisor or manager. A secondary review and approval is given by the PNR Program team before the role is assigned. Twice a year, the PNR Program team completes an audit of all PAXIS users with PNR access to ensure only users requiring access have that role. For a list of PAXIS profiles and the associated permissions, please see the Appendix.
13. Each query and review of passenger data elements in PAXIS is recorded for audit purposes.

Timeframes for access to data in PAXIS

14. Per section 3 of the [PPIR](#), PNR data about a traveller is retained in PAXIS for 3.5 years after the CBSA receives the data, unless the data is required as part of an

ongoing investigation, in which case it may be retained until the investigation is concluded, or up to a maximum of six years.

15. As set out in section 4 of the [PPIR](#), access to PNR data in PAXIS changes over three distinct timeframes. During each timeframe, the treatment of PNR data becomes progressively more restrictive:
- a. All PNR data collected is available for the first 72 hours after it is received.
 - b. For the period beginning 72 hours after receipt, and continuing until 2 years after receipt, the names of travellers in the PNR are masked. These may be unmasked only where a targeting or intelligence official reasonably believes that the name of the person is required in order to proceed with an investigation relating to a terrorism offence or serious transnational crime.
 - c. For the period beginning 2 years after receipt, and continuing until the data is deleted 3.5 years after it was received, all PNR data elements which could serve to identify the person to whom the information relates are masked.

Access to PNR in Analytics system(s)

16. PNR data is also copied into a secondary protected system for analytics and risk indicator/scenario development purposes.
17. Access to the PNR is given to a limited number of users in the Targeting Data Analytics team and is retained for a maximum of 3.5 years from date of receipt.
18. Scenarios are created, deleted or revised by the National Targeting Centre's Targeting Travellers Intelligence unit based on intelligence information. Analysts can simulate a scenario against depersonalized historical PNR information to assess the operational impact of the scenario and limit the impact on travellers. No personal information is returned in the results.

Requesting access to PNR received two or more years ago

19. As required by subsection 4(3) of the [PPIR](#), CBSA officials may have access to retained PNR elements in CBSA systems that could serve to identify a person

which are 2 to 3.5 years old only if the President of the CBSA authorizes such access as necessary to identify an individual who is reasonably suspected of having committed a terrorist offence or serious transnational crime.

20. Any request for Presidential approval to unmask this data must be made in writing. The requesting official must explain their suspicion, and set out specific and articulable facts that support the suspicion on a particularized and objective basis.

Note: A 'template' Briefing Note is available from the PNR Program team (if required).

21. The President may only authorize such a request where the President has determined there are reasonable grounds to suspect that the individual in question has committed the alleged offence. This requires a finding that there is a reasonable possibility the individual has committed the offence, grounded in objective facts.

22. Presidential authorization may only be given in writing. Subsection 4(6) of the [PPIR](#) requires that a record be kept of any Presidential authorization. This record must be retained for at least two years. At a minimum, this record must contain:

- a. The name of the requesting official
- b. The reasons for the request
- c. The name of the subject of the request and
- d. The date on which the request was made, the date the request was authorized, and the date the information was accessed

23. Access to other personal information may not be used by a CBSA official to gain access to PNR information about the same person outside of the above processes.

Disclosure of PNR

24. PNR information may only be disclosed pursuant to the applicable provisions of the [PPIR](#) for immigration-related cases as per section 8 of the [Privacy Act](#), or under section 107 of the [Customs Act](#) for customs-related cases. Nevertheless, it is the

policy of the CBSA that all disclosures of PNR data must comply with the principles laid out in sections 6-9 of the [PPIR](#).

25. For any disclosures of PNR, the following caveat must be included:

This information originates from the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA). It is disclosed specifically to your department/agency in confidence and for internal use only. This document contains information whose retention is restricted by the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Regulations* or the *Protection of Passenger Information Regulations* and must be destroyed once the information has served its purpose or before **[enter date of six years after CBSA received the data]**. This document is not to be reclassified, copied, reproduced, used or further disseminated, in whole or in part, without the written permission of the CBSA. It is not to be used in affidavits, court proceedings or subpoenas or for any other legal or judicial purpose without the written permission of the CBSA. The handling and storing of this document must comply with handling and storage guidelines established by the Government of Canada for classified information. This caveat is an integral part of this document and must accompany any extracted information.

Disclosure of PNR to domestic authorities

26. The CBSA may disclose PNR to domestic authorities, including federal and provincial departments and authorities, such as the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, the Canadian Security Intelligence Service, and provincial and municipal police forces. Such disclosures may be made in response to a request; pursuant to the terms of a written agreement or arrangement between the CBSA and the domestic recipient; or as a proactive disclosure, that is, where a CBSA official provides information to a domestic recipient without said recipient having asked for the information. A disclosure of PNR in any of the foregoing circumstances is subject to the following principles as laid out in section 6 of the [PPIR](#):

- a. The disclosure must be on a case-by-case basis. PNR must never be disclosed in bulk.

- b. There are reasonable grounds to believe that the PNR would be relevant to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of a terrorism offence or serious transnational crime. Reasonable grounds exist if the CBSA official authorizing the disclosure believes the PNR would be relevant to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of a terrorism offence or serious transnational crime, and that belief is supported by compelling and credible information. In cases where a CBSA official has concerns as to whether there are reasonable grounds to disclose, the official may advise the requester that a subpoena or a judicial order may be required.
- c. The receiving department or authority exercises functions directly related to the prevention, detection, investigation or prosecution of terrorism offences or serious transnational crimes. This condition cannot be satisfied if the receiving department or authority does not have clear lawful authority to receive the PNR in question.
- d. The receiving department or authority has undertaken to apply standards to protect the PNR that are at least equivalent to those set out in the [PPIR](#). This would include commitments to not use the PNR other than for the prevention, detection, investigation or prosecution of terrorism offences or serious transnational crimes; and to not retain the PNR longer than the retention limits discussed in paragraph 14 of this memorandum. This may be accomplished through the use of caveats included with the disclosure.
- e. The receiving department or authority has undertaken not to further disclose the PNR without the permission of the Agency, unless required by law to do so. Like the requirements in paragraph 25(c), this may be accomplished through the use of caveats included with the disclosure.
- f. The CBSA must disclose only the minimum elements of PNR necessary for the purposes for which it is disclosed.

27. Deciding to disclose PNR is a discretionary decision that should be exercised with care and only after diligent consideration of the circumstances. A lawful authority to disclose must always exist and the onus is on the official approving the disclosure to ensure that there is an appropriate rationale for the disclosure and that the principles laid out in paragraph 26 are satisfied. Proactive disclosures in particular, should only take place where an official is of an opinion that the receiving

department or authority's interest in the disclosure clearly outweighs the person's expectation of privacy.

28. Per section 7 of the [PPIR](#), despite the principles laid out in paragraph 26, nothing prevents the Agency from disclosing PNR information to comply with a subpoena, warrant or order issued by a court, person or body with jurisdiction in Canada to compel the production of information. This is the only exception to the disclosure requirements outlined in the foregoing paragraphs.
29. Whenever it becomes evident that a disclosure of PNR may lead to a series of similar disclosures to the same department or authority, it is recommended that the Agency enter into a written collaborative arrangement (WCA) with the recipient of the information. The WCA must satisfy all the principles laid out in paragraph 26.

Disclosure of PNR to foreign authorities

30. The CBSA may disclose PNR to a foreign government authority only where there is an applicable international agreement or arrangement that authorizes the disclosure of PNR by the CBSA to the receiving foreign government authority. A disclosure of PNR subject to such an agreement or arrangement must meet the following principles as laid out in section 8 of the [PPIR](#):
 - a. The disclosure must be on a case-by-case basis. PNR must never be disclosed in bulk.
 - b. There are reasonable grounds to believe that the PNR would be relevant to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of a terrorism offence or serious transnational crime. Reasonable grounds exist if the CBSA official authorizing the disclosure believes the PNR would be relevant to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of a terrorism offence or serious transnational crime, and that belief is supported by compelling and credible information.
 - c. The receiving foreign government authority exercises functions directly related to the prevention, detection, investigation or prosecution of terrorism offences or serious transnational crimes.

- d. The receiving foreign government authority has undertaken to apply standards to protect the PNR that are at least equivalent to those set out in the [PPIR](#). This would include commitments to not use the PNR other than for the prevention, detection, investigation or prosecution of terrorism offences or serious transnational crimes; and to not retain the PNR longer than the retention limits discussed in paragraph 14 of this memorandum. This may be accomplished through the use of caveats included with the disclosure. If the receiving foreign government authority is subject to a treaty with the European Union (EU) that sets out standards to protect PNR, those standards will be considered equivalent for the purposes of this paragraph and thus additional caveats will not be necessary. Currently, this applies only to the foreign government authorities in the United States, United Kingdom and Australia, which have such treaties with the EU.
- e. The CBSA must disclose only the minimum elements of PNR necessary for the purposes for which it is disclosed.

31. Deciding to disclose PNR, especially outside of Canada, is a discretionary decision that should be exercised with care and only after diligent consideration of the circumstances. A lawful authority, and an applicable agreement or arrangement, must always exist and the onus is on the official approving the disclosure to ensure that there is an appropriate rationale for the disclosure and the conditions laid out in paragraph 30 are satisfied.

Recording disclosures of PNR

32. Section 9 of the [PPIR](#) requires that a record be kept of any disclosure of PNR. This record must be retained for at least two years. At a minimum, this record must contain:
- a. the name of the person to whom the information was disclosed, and the government department or authority where they are employed
 - b. the reasons for the disclosure
 - c. the name of the subject of the disclosure and
 - d. the date of the disclosure

33. Any disclosure record must also contain the lawful authority that was used to disclose the information and any caveats included.
34. The record of disclosure may be audited to ensure all required information is retained and that the appropriate caveats were shared with the receiving authority.

Rights of access, correction, and complaint

35. Upon request, the CBSA will provide any individual, regardless of citizenship or presence in Canada, access to their PNR information held by the CBSA. Individuals may make a request by completing the [Traveller's API/PNR Information Request and Pre-departure Air Exit](#) form (BSF153).
36. The CBSA will consider any individual's request to correct any error contained in their PNR information. The Agency will either make the applicable correction, or attach a notation to the information indicating a request for correction was refused, and respond to the individual with an explanation of the legal or factual reasons why the request was refused.
37. If a correction is made to the individual's data, or a notation is added, that information will be shared with any authorities that received the data via a disclosure request.
38. If you made a request under the *Privacy Act*, all individuals living in and outside of Canada may submit a complaint to the Officer of to Privacy Commissioner at [File a formal privacy complaint - Office of the Privacy Commissioner of Canada](#).

Additional information

39. Misuse of PNR Information in contravention of CBSA regulations, policies, directives, or standards may be subject to security screening review for cause as well as disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment. Additionally, a person knowingly disclosing, providing access to or using customs

information in a manner not authorized by the [Customs Act](#) is guilty of an indictable offence or an offence punishable on summary conviction under subsection 160(1) of that Act or potentially charged with criminal code violations, such as Breach of Trust, under section 122 of the [Criminal Code](#).

40. The CBSA is committed to remaining in compliance with the International Civil Aviation Organization's (ICAO) [Annex 9 Standards and Recommended Practices \(SARPs\)](#) on Facilitation. The SARPs provide an international benchmark for which the CBSA, Government of Canada, and other Governments and their customs and/or immigration authorities can meet to ensure that the PNR data received from commercial air carriers is processed and retained according to international standards.

Appendix

PAXIS Profiles	
Role (#)	Purpose
Project Support User (2293)	May be assigned to officers who are employed on teams working on PAXIS system development projects.
Business Support (2294)	May be assigned to officers who are employed on teams working on business system support for the PAXIS system.
Targeting Officer – People (2295)	May only be assigned to Targeting Officers employed by the people targeting section at the National Targeting Centre.
Targeting Supervisor/Manager (2296)	May only be assigned to Targeting Supervisors and Managers who work in the targeting people section at the National Targeting Centre.
Targeting Ops Support – People (2297)	May only be assigned to program officers who are employed in the NTC Targeting Ops Support Unit – People.
NTC Intelligence – People (2298)	May only be assigned to officers employed by the Targeting Operations Intelligence Unit who support NTC Targeting – People.

Traveller Targeting Programs (2299)	May be assigned to program officers within the Programs Branch who are employed on the team responsible for the targeting program.
Regional/HQ Intelligence (2300)	May be assigned to CBSA Intelligence Officers and Analysts.
HQ Program Support (2301)	May be assigned to program officers employed at HQ that support IAPI, API/PNR program or the targeting program.
Compliance Officer (2302)	May be assigned only to program officers who are employed with the Airline Compliance Unit.
BOC Officer (2345)	May be given to officers employed in the Border Operations Centre in support of API/PNR and targeting programs.

References

Consult these resources for further information.

Applicable legislation and regulations

[Customs Act](#)

[Immigration and Refugee Protection Act](#)

[Privacy Act](#)

[Passenger Information \(Customs\) Regulations](#)

[Immigration and Refugee Protection Regulations](#)

[Protection of Passenger Information Regulations](#)

Related D memoranda

[Memorandum D2-7-1](#)

Superseded D memoranda

D1-16-3, September 28, 2022

Issuing office

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Contact us

For more information within Canada, call the Border Information Service at 1-800-461-9999. From outside Canada, call 204-983-3500 or 506-636-5064. Long distance charges will apply. Agents are available Monday to Friday (08:00 – 16:00 local time / except holidays). TTY is also available within Canada: 1-866-335-3237.