



10 November 2005

Singapore evaluating new scanners that can detect plastic explosives

By Dominique Loh, Channel NewsAsia

Singapore's Immigration and Checkpoints Authority is presently evaluating new scanners that can detect plastic explosives.

Passengers travelling in and out of Singapore in the future may find their luggage scanned not once but twice.

In addition to X-ray scanning machines, their bags may also be going through a new generation scanner that can detect highly dangerous items like plastic explosives.

Gary Pennfeather, Vice President - Commercial Systems, QR Sciences, said: "Current scanners are focused on old threats detecting metals guns and knives, so X-ray machines do a good job of that. This machine works in conjunction with that, it adds the ability to detect some of the high explosives like plastic. The world has moved on a bit, explosives are now the weapon of choice for terrorists."

Eric Chan, Large-Scale Systems Group, Singapore Technologies Electronics, said: "One of my customer, ICA is very keen to take a look at this machine, I think with the threat that is a key problem. ICA is planning to deploy this at one of the sites for evaluation so that's the reason why ST Electronics brought in this machine for this show and evaluation."

The advantage of this machine is not just its ability to detect plastic explosives, but also its speed.

It can scan 400 bags an hour, enough to cope with Singapore's busiest checkpoints.

The US\$200,000 scanner was developed by an Australian firm with funding from the government there and the Department of Homeland Security in the US.

Singapore is the third country to test the scanner after the US and Italy.