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Biometric passport technology hacked

By Derek Sooman, TechSpot.com
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The UK government and the governments of many other EU countries are touting biometric passports as the answer to many problems, illegal immigrants and the threat of terrorism being some of the main ones. As from last March, anyone in the UK applying for a renewal or new passport has received a biometric one. Such biometric passports contain data such as the owner's fingerprints, facial scans and iris patterns, all stored on a built in chip.



Rather worryingly, at the recent Defcon security conference in Las Vegas, Lukas Grunwald, a consultant with a German security company, [unveiled a technique](#) he had devised to clone the information stored in the new passports. He has found that the data held on the chips [can be transferred](#) onto blank chips, which could then be implanted in fake passports. This discovery, he claims, throws the whole legitimacy of the initiative into disrepute.

"The whole passport design is totally brain damaged," said Mr Grunwald to Wired.com.

"From my point of view all of these [biometric] passports are a huge waste of money – they're not increasing security at all."

He went on to claim that when using a fake card, where there is an automatic inspection system, he would be able to enter any country he liked. Grunwald claims to have made his discovery within two weeks of trying to copy the data. Currently, there exists no means to alter data once it's copied across to the blank chips, but Grunwald claims that this presents no barrier to using the technique fraudulently.

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