Ghana's shady e-Gate Project

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Image Source: Citi FM

explain my recent tweet about the biometric e-gate solution recently commissioned by Ghana's Vice President (Veep).

immigration management system is largely funded by the United States and supported by US contractors.
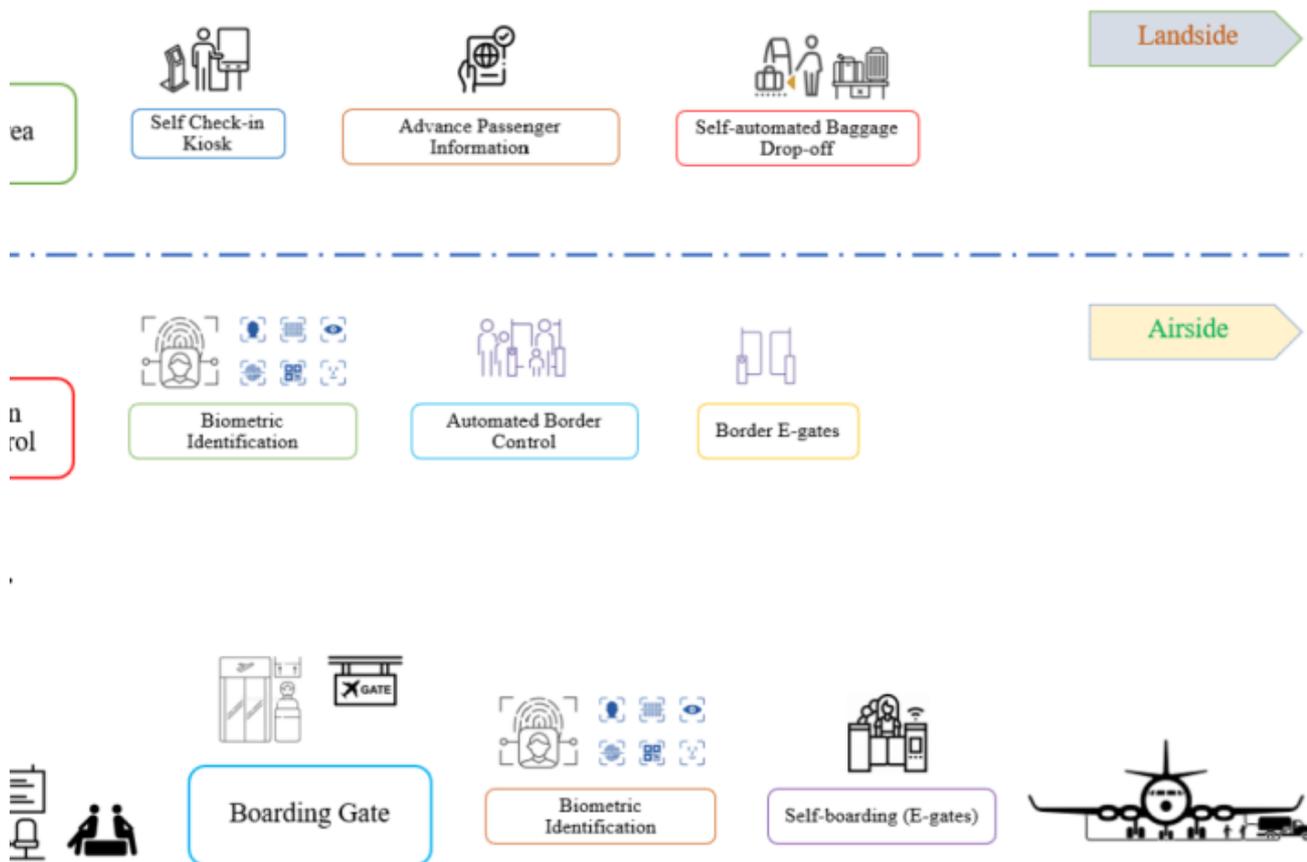
the system is "controlled" by the US or that all the data is managed by the US. The existing arrangement provides for all the ana. The Ghanaian immigration authorities have in fact deployed on-premise servers to handle their own data. There is also nsitioned to the Ghanaian side. Only pure indolence and neglect have stalled this to date.

owever, created the perfect pretext for politically connected entrepreneurs and their politician-enablers to cook up all tedly to restore Ghana's sovereignty in immigration matters.

s taken to include the modernisation of the electronic immigration system (e-immigration) in the long-term World Bank a dating from 2006, known as e-Ghana. e-Ghana was succeeded, and enhanced, by the e-Transform program, which

ent of e-Transform included both software for immigration, border, and visa management, and hardware for biometric e-

f a broader trend towards the digitalisation of movement across borders.

Source: Manasak Pamornmalirat (2023)

gration program could fully take off, there was a change of government. Typical in Ghana, this led to some confusion about
gnificant amounts of money had been disbursed by 2019.

k, <u>writing in April 2020</u>, described progress:

is was the single largest sub-component in the eTransform project, amounting to
initial slow start, it is now operational. The application provides secure entry and exit
d residents to Ghana at some 10 entry points, including the international airport,
der crossings. It covers issue of visas, work permits and biometric identification, as
hection between the Ghana Immigration Service (GIS) and other national and
cies. The Secure Border Management System (SBMS) went live on December 6, 2018
ively replaced the older Personal Identification Secure Comparison and Evaluation
system, which does not conform to Ghanaian privacy and data protection
e visa management system has been operational since February 8, 2019. However, in
aximum value from the system, **some US$2.9m in additional financing is required**
ates installed in Terminal 2 to the newer Terminal 3, to extend the managed services
vendor by six months, and to purchase 33 additional workstations to speed up
als at the international airport.

l been spent on a secure immigration system and e-gates by 2019, however an additional $2.9 million was said to be
-Gates in Terminal 3 of the international airport by 2020. The government of Ghana itself made financial allocations to the
ed to fully disclose.

, was hired and paid some of this money to integrate these components into a single, seamless, system. The corporation nd completed handover formalities in 2020.

les, also writing in 2020, described its delivery:

Key components of the Ghana E-immigration solution

- Fixed and mobile border management systems deployed in 6 main ports of entry
- Digital visa and permit application processing and issuing
- Implementation of an online portal for visa and permit requests
- Necessary datacenter and network upgrades
- 10 eGate systems for automated border control at Accra International Airport
- A robust centralized Automated Fingerprint Identification System (AFIS)

when during my investigations over the last two years at Ghana's international airport and inside Ghana's national security, **hese systems are in fact operational**. NONE!

fuddlement, that notwithstanding all this project design activity, contracting, millions of dollars spent, delivery, etc., politically ontractors had continued to push the government to "privatise the intervention" and find ways to insert them into the project dollars of fees.

ned this situation as part of a political economy context in which World Bank and other donor projects constantly fail to governance challenges.

e President's office became the center of gravity of all these machinations. Our deeply embedded sources there gave us inations to undermine the smooth rollout of the official e-Immigration program, shelf it, and re-award contracts to the most rs today, the Margins Group. The same fast-growing entity in charge of Ghana's privatised national identification system.

he project design finally signed off in the Veep's office:

ject Cost Breakdown

ment Cost US$92,950,000

upgrades US$863,383,456

and Maintenance US$83,791,853

Costs

US$240,125,315

on of Processing Fees

ll fees are to be introduced on all permits for GIS Services

)

n

al Passenger fee

$5.50

$5.50

Trip per passenger is $11 as compared to SECURIPORT of

$11.00

ou, dear reader. Essentially, Margins Group enlisted the Veep's powerbase to undermine attempts by another politically
riport, to deploy an e-Immigration solution offering exactly the same features that have **already been paid for, twice, by**
ed as successfully deployed.

ave been fully and effectively funded with ~$20 million of World Bank money was now packaged as a $240 million
he imposition of **additional tax** of $11 on air travellers to and from Ghana.

orities balked at the political implications of such a tax, the Veep's office broached the prospect of the money being
enue generated by Ghana Airport Company and the Ghana Immigration Services.

sources embedded deep in the security services, "this was outrageous!" Not only was it going to drain the immigration and
ources, it amounted to a wholesale privatisation of Ghana's national security system.

at was deployed at the airport yesterday in the name of launching a biometric e-gate was simply to protect a $240 million

r a parliamentary approval of the deal, these "state enchantment" tactics are meant to prevent any problems of future
all the relevant contracting is rammed through before this administration leaves office.