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Tord Roe,
Project Coordinator,
Norwegian Refugee Council



CUSTOMER NAME

Norwegian Refugee Council

INDUSTRY

Nonprofit

CHECK POINT PRODUCTS

Pointsec® Mobile™

Note: Pointsec Mobile Technologies was acquired by Check Point Software Technologies after this story was written

Encryption helps save lives

In order to provide the best possible aid to refugees seeking protection in camps, the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) moved its database containing personal information to PDAs. However, NRC cannot take the risk of having data on people on the run end up in the wrong hands. This is how Pointsec® Mobile™ encryption helps protect their lives.

The idea to streamline data collection and use came about in war-plagued Darfur in western Sudan. More than 3.4 million people have been affected by the ethnic and political conflict there. For many of them, one of the more than 100 camps and centers serviced by humanitarian organizations is the only place to find food, shelter, and medicine.

The Norwegian Refugee Council, one of the largest humanitarian organizations in Norway, home of the Nobel Peace Prize, manages the Kalma camp in southern Darfur, which houses about 100,000 people fleeing violence in the region. To register information and to keep this information updated on all of these people is not an easy task. However, it is necessary to quickly get an overview of the refugees and to keep updating the information in order to accurately assess their needs in an often disorderly situation with poor security.

MODERNIZING REGISTRATION

Tord Roe is the project coordinator for registration at the camp management division of NRC. It is Roe's responsibility to keep track of the refugees, to register who they are and their individual needs. This information is essential to be able to plan for practical issues, such as knowing how many people to provide supplies and shelter for, deciding how many toilets and wells are needed, and what the requirements are for medical care and protection.

“Historically, the tools for the registration process have been pen and paper, which is often a very time-consuming method,” Roe says. “In large operations, analog information might be already outdated by the time it has been entered into a PC database. People move, some die, and newborn babies first see the light of day in the camp.”



www.nrc.no

IMPROVED EFFICIENCY AND SECURITY

“I had been working with PDAs on a project in East Timor a few years back and figured that PDAs could be an alternative also in a humanitarian crisis like Darfur,” Roe explains. When calculating the costs of implementing handheld devices, Roe came to the conclusion that costs would be lower at the same time that efficiency would triple—and efficiency is crucial in NRC’s operations.

“All refugees get a registration card with a barcode when they come to register. This card will later be used for distribution of food or for updating records: the card is scanned in order to pull up their records on the PDA. The main database is automatically updated with new information from the handheld device. It’s a simple enough process that doesn’t require any special computer skills, and the addition of the encryption doesn’t complicate things, as the user only needs to remember the password. To work with a system of PDAs not only improves the quality of the humanitarian aid by enabling us to plan better, it will also improve security for the refugees.

“This system might revolutionize the way humanitarian assistance work is carried out in the field in crisis situations such as the one in Sudan and contribute to improved assistance and protection for people,” Roe says.

SECURITY IS CRUCIAL

One crucially important feature of the modernized system is keeping personal information securely protected. “Our database naturally runs an increased risk of being exposed when people carry it with them on small PDAs—that’s 100,000 lives in their pockets. My biggest nightmare is that our database would end up in the hands of the perpetrators that the people have fled from. That’s why it’s imperative to encrypt all data on the devices,” Roe says.



The Norwegian Refugee Council is a private foundation founded in 1946. The organization has ongoing projects in more than 20 countries and employs 2,000 people.

A PDA that is Pointsec Mobile-protected enjoys the same strong security as a Pointsec PC™-protected PC. Information is automatically encrypted and inaccessible without proper authentication. The Pointsec information security system is centrally managed. The security policy is set centrally, and the end users can’t choose not to encrypt or to bypass encryption in any way. It boots up automatically at signon. The only difference users will notice is a different login screen, but the encryption won’t slow them down. If memory cards are used with the PDA, they can be encrypted, as well.

“Knowing that our information is securely protected, that everything on the devices is encrypted by Pointsec Mobile, allows me to sleep well at night,” Roe says. “We can’t risk waking up to the news that a PDA with our database has gone astray, endangering human lives.”

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