

# EU Parliament backs US passenger data deal

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(AP) -- The European Union parliament on Thursday approved a new data agreement with the United States that tightens restrictions on sharing information about passengers flying from Europe to America.

The legislature meeting in Strasbourg, France, approved the [deal](#) on Thursday in a 409-226 vote with 33 abstentions. Those opposed to the deal say the [agreement](#) does not provide sufficient [privacy protection](#) for EU citizens.

The majority argued, however, that the agreement, which is aimed at combating terrorism and serious transnational crime, had made enough progress over an 2007 deal that EU lawmakers had criticized as being too lax.

"It provides stronger protection of EU citizens' right to privacy and more legal certainty for air carriers," EU Home Affairs Commissioner Cecilia Malmstroem said.

The agreement centers on data gathered by air carriers and includes addresses, credit details, luggage information and passengers' seat numbers.

U.S. authorities say such data has helped nearly all of their high-profile terrorist investigations and welcomed the parliament's approval.

Under the new arrangement, passengers will be able to obtain access to their records to correct them. Names are redacted after six months, and

data can be retained for up to 15 years.

Liberal Sophie in 't Veld, the parliament's rapporteur on the issue, opposed the accord because it still allowed the data to be used for unspecified purposes such as customs or public health.

"Unfortunately, it still falls short of the high standards of data privacy and legal protection that our citizens expect," In 't Veld said. "Some things are not negotiable, such as fundamental rights."

But she said Washington had made it clear it would respond to a "no" vote by suspending visa-free travel by EU citizens to the U.S.

Beyond the fight against terrorism, the records can also help in catching murderers, drug traffickers and other major criminals, officials say.

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