

US-VISIT



**Homeland
Security**

Press Release

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DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY UNVEILS US-VISIT PROGRAM

WASHINGTON, DC, OCT. 28, 2003 – The U.S. Department of Homeland Security today unveiled the capability it will have in place at airports and seaports on December 31, 2003, to process visitors holding visas as they enter the United States.

The US-VISIT program -- United States Visitor and Immigrant Status Indicator Technology -- is a cornerstone of the Department's goals to improve border management at our ports of entry. By capturing more complete arrival and departure data for those who require a visa to enter the United States, the US-VISIT program will enhance the security of our citizens and visitors while expediting legitimate travel and trade.

“We are moving rapidly to complete development and deploy the US-VISIT capability to meet the congressionally mandated deadline of December 31, 2003,” said Asa Hutchinson, Under Secretary of Border & Transportation Security of the Department of Homeland Security. “We are on target to achieve this first increment of US-VISIT,” he said.

US-VISIT uses scanning equipment to collect “biometric identifiers,” such as fingerprints, in an inkless process, along with a digital photograph of the visitor. Together with the standard information gathered from a visitor about their identity and travel, the new program will verify the visitor's identity and compliance with visa and immigration policies. The new procedures are expected to add just seconds to the entry and exit process.

All data obtained from the visitor is securely stored as part of the visitor's travel record. This information is made available only to authorized officials and selected law enforcement agencies responsible for ensuring the safety and security of U.S. citizens and foreign visitors.

At exit points, visitors will check out at kiosks by scanning their visa or passport and repeating the simple inkless fingerprinting process. The exit confirmation will be added to the visitor's travel records to demonstrate compliance. Land border processing will be introduced in phases in 2005 and 2006.

“All of these entry and exit procedures address our critical need for tighter security *and* our commitment to expedite travel for the millions of legitimate visitors we welcome each year to conduct business, learn, see family or tour the country,” said Under Secretary Hutchinson.

“The new program is designed to enhance the security of U.S. citizens and visitors, expedite legitimate travel and trade, ensure the integrity of the immigration system, and safeguard visitors’ personal privacy,” Hutchinson continued.

The law requires that an automated entry/exit system be implemented at air and seaports by December 31, 2003; the 50 most highly trafficked land ports of entry by December 31, 2004; and all ports of entry by December 31, 2005.

DHS is working closely with the air and sea industry to explain the requirements of the US-VISIT program. In addition, the US-VISIT Project Team will partner with industry to ensure the latest technologies available will be incorporated into US-VISIT. The request for proposal will be issued in November 2003.

The US-VISIT program received \$380 million for fiscal year 2003 and was appropriated \$330 million for fiscal year 2004.

For more information, visit <http://www.dhs.gov/us-visit>.

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US-VISIT

FACT SHEET

THE US-VISIT GOALS

The goals of US-VISIT are to:

- Enhance the security of our citizens and visitors
- Expedite legitimate travel and trade
- Ensure the integrity of the immigration system
- Safeguard the personal privacy of our visitors

HOW IT WORKS: ENTRY

- Many of the entry procedures in place today remain unchanged and are familiar to international travelers.
- Customs and Border Protection Officers will review travel documents, such as a visa and passport, and ask questions about the visitor's stay in the U.S.
- The new, inkless fingerprint scanner is easy to use. The visitor will be asked to put one and then the other index finger on a glass plate that will electronically capture two of their fingerprints. No ink is used.
- Visitors also will be asked to look into a camera and their picture will be taken. This can be done while fingerprinting is in process.
- The enhancements to the entry procedures add minimal time – seconds in most cases -- to the process.

EXIT:

- The exit procedures at airports and seaports will be phased in, with up to ten airports and one seaport operational by December 31, 2003. Remaining airports and seaports will be operational in early 2004.
- At the international departure area, visitors will see automated, self-service departure locations where they will be asked to scan their visa and repeat the fingerprinting process on the inkless device, at which point their photograph will be taken. Attendants will be available to assist with the process.
- The exit confirmation will be added to the visitor's travel records to demonstrate compliance and record the individual's status for future visits to the United States.

ENHANCING SECURITY...

- The addition of biometric identifiers, such as fingerprints, makes our security system more effective than names databases alone.

- Biometric identifiers also protect our visitors by making it virtually impossible for anyone else to claim their identity should their travel documents be stolen or duplicated.
- By combining these entry and exit processes, and by securely storing the travel records, we can account for visitors who require a visa for travel to the U.S.

EXPEDITING TRAVEL...

- US-VISIT procedures are designed to be easy. The enhanced entry procedures at airports and seaports add minimal time to the immigration process, which typically takes 60-90 seconds without US-VISIT procedures.

... AND RESPECTING PRIVACY AND THE ENVIRONMENT

- Travel data will be securely stored, and is made available only to authorized officials and selected law enforcement agencies on a need-to-know basis to help protect the nation against those who intend harm to our citizens or our visitors.
- As we look toward implementation of US-VISIT at land ports of entry, we have been carefully studying and working to mitigate environmental impacts. Respect for the environment is a key goal of the program.

US-VISIT: TIMING AND DELIVERY

- The Department of Homeland Security is aggressively working to meet the Congressional end-of-year deadline to have in place an entry and exit system that strengthens security through identity verification and expedites travel for legitimate visitors while respecting their privacy and our environment.
- The Department of Homeland Security is also on track to meet the Secretary's deadline to implement technology at the primary inspection location that will collect and verify biometric information -- fingerprints and photos -- of foreign nationals who are required to obtain a visa to enter the United States.
- The entry enhancements to the immigration process -- taking fingerprints and photos -- will be operative in 115 airports and 14 major seaports by December 31, 2003.
- The exit procedures will be phased in at airports and seaports. By December 31, 2003, exit procedures will be operational at up to ten airports and at one seaport. Visitors requiring a visa to travel to the United States who leave from one of those airports or seaports will check out to confirm their compliance with immigration policies.
- Exit procedures will be phased in at the remaining major airports and seaports in early 2004.

- Entry and exit enhancements at land borders will be phased in throughout 2005 and 2006.
- The US-VISIT program received \$362 million for FY 03 and has been authorized \$330 million for FY 04.

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Q&As: BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Introduction

The Department of Homeland Security's US-VISIT Program, which will serve to protect the United States and its territories from threats to national security, is one of the Agency's top priorities. The program will provide the capability to record the entry and exit of non-US citizens into and out of the United States, and provide officials with information about persons who are in the United States in violation of the terms of their admission to the United States.

- The goals of US-VISIT are to:
 - Enhance the security of our citizens and visitors
 - Expedite legitimate travel and trade
 - Ensure the integrity of the immigration system
 - Safeguard the personal privacy of our visitors

What are the laws authorizing the US-VISIT Program?

In Section 110 of the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996 (IIRIRA), Congress initially directed the Attorney General to develop an automated entry and exit control system to collect records of arrival and departure from every foreign visitor entering and leaving the United States. However, Congress amended and replaced Section 110 of IIRIRA with the Immigration and Naturalization Service Data Management Improvement Act (DMIA) of 2000, which directed the integration of existing Department of Justice/Department of State electronic foreign visitor arrival and departure data systems.

DMIA prohibits the collection of new or additional data or the imposition of documentary requirements solely for purposes of implementing the System required by DMIA. However, DMIA further states that nothing in that law shall be construed to reduce or curtail the Attorney General's or the Secretary of State's authority under any other provision of law.

How did the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, affect the implementation of the system?

The tragic acts of September 11, 2001 increased the urgency to create a comprehensive entry/exit system, and the Congress passed two important acts that have a significant impact on the US-VISIT Program:

- In the USA PATRIOT Act, Congress expressed a requirement for "speed" in the implementation and included the requirement that the White House Office of Homeland Security (OHS) be consulted with respect to the establishment of the Entry and Exit Program. The PATRIOT Act also introduced the concept of biometrics to establish a technology standard that would be used in the development of the US-VISIT System.
- The Enhanced Border Security and Visa Entry Reform Act expanded on the USA PATRIOT Act and the Data Management Improvement Act by directing increased requirements for US-VISIT System integration, interoperability with other law

enforcement and intelligence systems, biometrics, and accessibility. In addition, the Enhanced Border Security Act mandated the electronic arrival/departure manifest requirement.

What agencies under the Department of Homeland Security are working together to create the US-VISIT Program?

The US-VISIT Program team consists of representatives from the various components of DHS responsible for border security, including the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP), and the Transportation Security Administration. U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (CIS) is also represented. In addition, outside the DHS, the team consists of representatives from the Department of Transportation, the Department of State, and the General Services Administration.

Who is responsible for enforcing the program?

The Secretary of Homeland Security is responsible for enforcing the provisions which are the basis for establishing a comprehensive entry/exit system. Within the Department of Homeland Security, the Undersecretary for Border and Transportation Security is responsible for implementing US-VISIT.

How will US-VISIT work?

Many of the procedures in place today remain unchanged and are familiar to international travelers. A U.S. Customs and Border Protection Officer will review each visitor's travel documents, such as a visa and passport, and ask questions about the visitor's stay in the U.S.

In addition, the U.S. Customs and Border Protection Officer will use an inkless fingerprint scanner to automatically read the fingerprints of arriving visitors holding visas. The visitor will be asked to put the index finger of one hand and then the index finger of the other hand on the scanner. The Customs and Border Protection Officer will also take a digital photograph of the visitor.

The biographic and fingerprint data will be used to verify the identity of the visitor and compared against watch lists. At that point, the U.S. Customs and Border Protection Officer will either admit the visitor or conduct additional inquiries based on the verification results. These procedures should reduce fraud, identity theft, and the risk that terrorists and criminals will enter the United States undetected.

When leaving the country, visitors will 'check out' at a departure kiosk located within the secure area of major international airports or seaports. Implementation of the biometric exit portion of US-VISIT at airports and seaports will begin in 2004.

How does a U.S. Customs and Border Protection Officer determine that a person requires additional or secondary screening?

If the data provided indicates possible national security concerns, other law enforcement concerns or improper documentation, then the inspector will refer the visitor for additional screening or assistance.

What is the process for visitors exiting the U.S.?

Prior to their international departure, visitors with visas will 'check out' at a self-service kiosk located within the secure area of major international airports or seaports. If additional assistance is needed, a US-VISIT attendant will be available to assist with the fingerprint and document scanning process. Implementation of the biometric exit portion of US-VISIT at airports and seaports will begin in 2004.

What happens after a person 'checks out'? How quickly will you know if they have overstayed their visit?

The arrival and departure records will be stored in the Arrival/Departure Information System (ADIS). This information will verify if an individual has complied with the terms of his or her visa. It is important that those required to go through departure control comply, so that they may be re-admitted to the United States on future visits.

ADIS data is constantly updated, and if a visitor overstays his or her allotted time, US-VISIT will record the failure to depart.

How will you check to identify if a visitor has overstayed his or her visit?

Arrival and departure records are immediately reconciled, and any inconsistency allows US-VISIT to determine when a visitor has overstayed.

What are the consequences for an individual who overstays his or her visa?

The consequences of violating immigration laws by overstaying periods of admission may vary from a review with immigration officials to removal from the United States or even a bar from future entry, depending on the individual circumstances.

Q&As: NSEERS AND US-VISIT

US-VISIT is a Department of Homeland Security program that enhances our country's entry and exit system for foreign nationals requiring a visa to enter the United States. Through US-VISIT, the United States will be able to effectively verify the identity of incoming visitors and confirm compliance with visa and immigration policies while continuing to expedite the process for legitimate trade and travel.

When was the National Security Entry Exit Registration System (NSEERS) deployed, and will it be part of the US-VISIT program?

NSEERS was a pilot project focusing on a smaller segment of the non-immigrant population deemed to be of risk to national security. The National Security Entry Exit Registration (NSEERS) System was introduced at all ports of entry on October 1, 2002.

Currently, at the ports of entry, inspectors have the discretion, based on national security criteria and intelligence reports, to refer an individual from any country to a more detailed secondary inspection.

What is domestic registration or "call ins" for certain countries?

Males born on or before November 15, 1986, and who are nationals of designated countries, were required to register at a local district immigration office. The process included an interview by an immigration inspector and the collection of fingerprints and a photograph. The list of countries required to register were the following: Iran, Iraq, Libya, Sudan, Syria, Afghanistan, Algeria, Bahrain, Eritrea, Lebanon, Morocco, North Korea, Oman, Qatar, Somalia, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, Yemen, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Bangladesh, Egypt, Indonesia, Jordan, and Kuwait.

When was the last registration?

The last registration for group four ended on April 25, 2003.

Will NSEERS continue under the Department of Homeland Security?

Once the US-VISIT program is fully implemented, it will provide the crucial information necessary on visitors to the United States for border security and facilitation purposes. For this reason, DHS has decided to end domestic registration programs such as NSEERS. However, registration at the ports of entry still continues.

With the end of domestic registration, does that mean that there is no longer a 30-day or annual requirement to register?

Both the 30-day and annual requirement to register still continue. However, DHS is evaluating these requirements and will make a determination whether or not they will continue.

Q&As: DEADLINES AND TIMING

US-VISIT is a Department of Homeland Security program that enhances our country's entry and exit system for foreign nationals requiring a visa to enter the United States. Through US-VISIT, the United States will be able to effectively verify the identity of incoming visitors and confirm compliance with visa and immigration policies while continuing to expedite the process for legitimate trade and travel.

What are the deadlines for completing a comprehensive, automated entry/exit program at all ports of entry (POEs)?

The law requires that an automated entry/exit program be implemented at air and seaports by December 31, 2003; the 50 most highly trafficked land ports of entry (POES) by December 31, 2004; and all POEs by December 31, 2005.

What are the deadlines by which a biometric identifier must be included in documents?

By October 26, 2004, countries in the Visa Waiver Program are mandated by the USA PATRIOT Act to certify that they have programs to issue their nationals machine-readable passports that incorporate biometric identifiers that comply with standards established by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO). In addition, by the same time, the Secretary of Homeland Security and the Secretary of State must issue only machine-readable documents that use biometrics.

The Secretary of State was given the authority to postpone the effective date for a visa waiver country's citizens to present a machine-readable passport is contained in the USA PATRIOT Act, which legislated the requirement for machine-readable passports for visa waiver travelers.

To assist the Secretary of State in making this decision, in coordination with the Secretary of Homeland Security, Visa Waiver Program countries sent Diplomatic Notes, acknowledging that the waiver will be granted only once and that it expires on October 26, 2004.

Any country requesting this postponement must certify that it is making progress toward ensuring that machine-readable passports are available to its nationals and it has taken appropriate measures to protect against misuse of its non-machine-readable passports.

The Department of State consulted with the Department of Homeland Security before making the decision to grant a one-time waiver of the machine-readable passport requirement through October 26, 2004.

What is the timing for having an exit system in place?

An exit system will be in place when US-VISIT becomes operational on December 31, 2003. Initially, the electronic manifests and I-94s for arrivals and departures will be reconciled to verify departures. As departure kiosks are deployed in 2004, biometric exit data will be added to the system. Visitors traveling with a visa will be required to use these departure kiosks prior to leaving the United States.

Q&As: VISA WAIVER COUNTRIES

US-VISIT is a Department of Homeland Security program that enhances our country's entry and exit system for foreign nationals requiring a visa to enter the United States. Through US-VISIT, the United States will be able to effectively verify the identity of incoming visitors and confirm compliance with visa and immigration policies while continuing to expedite the process for legitimate trade and travel.

Will there be a new set of rules applied to the Visa Waiver Program countries?

Yes. The Visa Waiver Permanent Program Act of 2000 directed the collection of records of arrival and departure for every foreign visitor who travels by sea or air and who is provided a waiver under the Visa Waiver Program (VWP). The act required that these air and sea VWP records be incorporated into an automated entry exit system.

As of October 1, 2002, no visa waiver may be granted to an alien if the carrier is not submitting data electronically to our automated system. This requirement is currently being met.

In addition, by October 26, 2004, countries in the Visa Waiver Program are mandated by the USA PATRIOT Act to certify that they have programs to issue their nationals machine-readable passports that incorporate biometric identifiers that comply with standards established by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO). Any passport issued after October 26, 2004, must be an ICAO-compliant travel document that uses biometrics, if the bearer applies for admission into the United States under the Visa Waiver Program. In addition, by the same time, the Secretary of Homeland Security and the Secretary of State must issue only machine-readable documents that use biometrics.

Which countries are in the Visa Waiver Program?

Andorra, Austria, Australia, Belgium, Brunei, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Monaco, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, San Marino, Singapore, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom (For citizens with the unrestricted right of permanent abode in England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland, the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man.)

For more information on the Visa Waiver Program, please consult www.state.gov.

Q&As: BIOMETRICS

US-VISIT is a Department of Homeland Security program that enhances our country's entry and exit system for foreign nationals requiring a visa to enter the United States. Through US-VISIT, the United States will be able to effectively verify the identity of incoming visitors and confirm compliance with visa and immigration policies while continuing to expedite the process for legitimate trade and travel.

What does the word "biometric" mean?

Biometrics are automated methods of recognizing a person based on a physiological or behavioral characteristic. Among the features that can be measured are: face, fingerprints, hand geometry, handwriting, iris, retinal, vein, and voice. Biometric technologies are the basis of an extensive array of highly secure identification and personal verification solutions.

When will a biometric capability be employed in the system?

The Secretary announced that US-VISIT would have the capability to collect biometrics, initially fingerprints and photographs, at air and sea ports of entry by December 31, 2003.

Who will decide which biometric(s) are implemented in the system?

According to the Enhanced Border Security Act, the Secretary of Homeland Security and the Secretary of State shall jointly establish document authentication standards and biometric identifiers standards to be employed on such visas and other travel and entry documents from among those biometric identifiers recognized by domestic and international standards organizations. The National Institutes of Standards and Technology (NIST) recommended the use of fingerprints and photographs as the biometrics to be used for US-VISIT.

Which biometrics will individuals be required to submit for admission to the United States?

The National Institutes of Standards and Technology (NIST) recommended, and the Secretary of Homeland Security and the Secretary of State have approved, the use of fingerprints and photographs as the biometrics that will be used in the US-VISIT system for US-issued travel documents. In addition, the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) has selected facial recognition as the globally interoperable biometrics to be used for international travel. The US-VISIT system will be designed to accommodate these technologies.

What do biometrics add to the security equation?

The addition of biometric identifiers, such as fingerprints, makes our security systems more effective than the current process. Currently, only biographic data such as a visitor's name is compared against watch lists of suspected terrorists, criminals and other violators. The use of biometric identifiers in addition to biographic data will make it more difficult for suspects to hide their true identities in an attempt to escape detection and enter the United States illegally.

Biometric identifiers also protect our visitors because it makes it virtually impossible for anyone else to claim their identity should their travel documents be stolen or duplicated. Biometric identifiers will also reduce fraud and abuse of the immigration system.

By combining these entry and exit processes, and by securely storing the travel records, we can account for visitors who are required to travel here on a visa.

Is there a fee for those who will need to obtain a biometric visa?

The Department of State is the Administrator of the program and will determine if there is change in the fee for issuance of a biometric visa.

When will DHS have the equipment and software in place at ports of entry to read biometric documents?

Congress mandated in the Enhanced Border Security Act that by October 26, 2004, equipment and software to allow biometric comparison and authentication of all United States visas and other travel and entry documents must be installed at all points of entry.

Will U.S. citizens be required to submit biometric data?

No. U.S. citizens will not be required to be electronically fingerprinted or photographed upon entering the United States. U.S. citizens wishing to participate in the Dedicated Commuter Lane (DCL) programs such as SENTRI and NEXUS or other expedited processing programs may voluntarily submit biographic and biometric data to expedite their travel.

The Department of State will begin issuing machine-readable United States passports that include facial recognition technology in the future. Facial recognition, which involves electronically calibrated measurements of a photograph to verify identity, was selected by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) as the globally interoperable biometric for identity verification in travel documents.

Is biometric data captured on all temporary visitors and immigrants regardless of country of origin?

Initially, we will capture biometrics from visitors with a non-immigrant visa regardless of country of origin, except for Canadian citizens. However, as the US-VISIT program evolves, the program may be expanded in accordance with applicable laws and regulations, in order to meet national needs.

The United States has existing agreements with Canada, and under current policy, Canadians are not subject to US-VISIT.

Q&As: INFORMATION COLLECTION & USE

US-VISIT is a Department of Homeland Security program that enhances our country's entry and exit system for foreign nationals requiring a visa to enter the United States. Through US-VISIT, the United States will be able to effectively verify the identity of incoming visitors and confirm compliance with visa and immigration policies while continuing to expedite the process for legitimate trade and travel.

What information will be collected, and how will it be stored?

The US-VISIT program, once implemented, will collect information on foreign visitors' arrivals and departures by date, nationality, and classification as an immigrant or non-immigrant, and biometric identifiers. The information will be stored in databases maintained by DHS and the Department of State as part of an individual's travel record.

Who will have access to the information?

The system will be available to U.S. Customs and Border Protection Officers at ports of entry, special agents in the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, adjudications staff at U.S. Citizens Immigration Services offices, and United States consular offices – and appropriate federal, state, and local law enforcement personnel.

Why do these people need access to this information?

They need access to this information to secure our nation and its visitors from those wanting to do harm. The information identifies non-immigrants who may have overstayed their visas or otherwise violated the terms of their admission, to assist in the adjudication of immigration benefits, and to assist certain other federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies as necessary.

How will that information be protected?

The program will be implemented in compliance with the Privacy Act. Only authorized officials will have access to the data, and only for official business on a need-to-know basis. Careful safeguards will ensure that the data is not used or accessed improperly. In addition, the DHS privacy officer will review pertinent aspects of the program to ensure that proper safeguards are in place.

What is Advance Passenger Information, and how will that be part of the system?

As part of ongoing efforts to enhance public safety and national security and to meet legislative requirements in section 402 of the Enhanced Border Security Act, Homeland Security requires all commercial carriers to submit detailed passenger manifests to Customs and Border Protection (CBP) electronically before a commercial aircraft or vessel arrives in or departs from the United States. The information is crucial to the clearance of passengers when they arrive at the ports of entry. This advance information will allow the US-VISIT system to pre-position data necessary for security and expediting purposes.

As of October 1, 2002, passenger arrival and departure information on individuals entering and leaving the United States under the Visa Waiver Program (VWP) has been electronically

collected from airlines and vessels, through CBP's Advance Passenger Information System (APIS).

What information is currently collected on arriving and departing passengers?

Currently, inspectors collect the information contained in the Machine Readable Zone (MRZ) on a travel document: name, date of birth, nationality, gender, passport number, document number, document type (passport, visa), and country of issuance. In addition, we collect carrier information such as flight number, etc.

What will be collected under the US-VISIT program?

Passenger information to be submitted in advance includes: complete name; date of birth; citizenship; gender; passport number and country of issuance; country of residence; alien registration number (where applicable); and complete address while in the United States.

Because temporary visitors must fill out an Arrival/Departure Card (I-94), doesn't the government already capture this information?

Yes, however, the airlines and cruise ships have always been required by law to submit this information. The new laws do require the information in advance of the arrival of the foreign national as well as in an electronic format.

Once that data is captured, how is it used?

The Advance Passenger Information System (APIS) sends this data to the Arrival and Departure Information System (ADIS) for matching arrivals and departures and reporting purposes. The ADIS sends all arrival information on students to the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS), which enables the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) to notify the schools that a new foreign student has arrived and should be arriving at their school within 30 days.

In practice, the arrival and departure records are based on passenger manifest information that carriers transmit to CBP. As of October 1, 2002, waivers may not be provided to a temporary foreign visitor arriving by air or sea at a port-of-entry in the United States on a carrier unless the carrier is electronically transmitting passenger data.

Q&As: OPERATIONS & PROGRAM MANAGEMENT

US-VISIT is a Department of Homeland Security program that enhances our country's entry and exit system for foreign nationals requiring a visa to enter the United States. Through US-VISIT, the United States will be able to effectively verify the identity of incoming visitors and confirm compliance with visa and immigration policies while continuing to expedite the process for legitimate trade and travel.

What progress has been made in the implementation of the US-VISIT Program?

Secretary Ridge has supported the creation of a US-VISIT Program Office, and positions have been approved to fill the organization. Currently, the US-VISIT Program Office consists of 10 government employees and one government contractor. Eventually, the organization will consist of 115 government employees. In addition, the US-VISIT Program Office anticipates the hiring of 177 contractors for a total of 292 employees.

Of the \$380 million in FY 03 spending, US-VISIT funding includes the purchasing of new computers and other equipment. To date, 1,957 workstations have been ordered, and 2,000 sets of peripherals will arrive at the ports of entry.

The US-VISIT team has also initiated the training process.

Will a more comprehensive check in/check out system at the ports of entry cause more delays at the points of entry?

We do not believe so. Most of the arrival processes remain unchanged and are familiar to international travelers. Only two additional procedures have been added to the current inspection process. The process is fast and easy.

As part of the enhanced procedures, visitors traveling on visas will be photographed and have two fingerprints taken at the Passport Control primary booth using a simple, inkless device. All of the data and information is then compared against our inspection and law enforcement databases to verify the visitor's identity and assist the inspector in making admissibility decisions. The fingerprinting, photographing and verification adds a few seconds. At that point, the U.S. Customs and Border Protection Officer will either admit the visitor or conduct additional inquiries based on the verification results.

Through the use of advance information, the US government will be better able to assess individuals entering the U.S., which will enable officers to expedite processing of visitors who enter the country legally. Our goal is to both improve our security system as well as facilitate the flow of legitimate trade and travel. Over time, we will continue to enhance the entry-exit system.

How much money has the US-VISIT program received this year?

The US-VISIT Program has received \$380 million for FY 03. The appropriations laws required that DHS submit a spending plan and meet other conditions and obtain approval from the Appropriation Committees before we may obligate the remainder of those funds. The release of the \$380 million reflects our complying with those conditions.

How are you working with the travel and airport/seaport industries to keep them updated and address their concerns about the program?

We are working closely with the air and sea industry regarding the requirements of the US-VISIT program. We see our relationship as a partnership and will continue to work together to secure our nation's borders while expediting legitimate travel and trade.

When will the Request For Proposals (RFP) be issued?

November 2003. The US-VISIT Project Team is working on an acquisition strategy that will ensure the latest technologies that are available will be incorporated into US-VISIT.

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REMARKS BY UNDER SECRETARY ASA HUTCHINSON

ON THE LAUNCH OF THE U.S. - VISIT PROGRAM

Monday, May 19, 2003
Washington, D.C.

At the Department of Homeland Security----my responsibility centers on the borders of the United States. What we do at our borders impacts our security, our economy and our relationship with the international community.

For that reason, I am grateful for this opportunity to talk about the future of our borders at CSIS. Your scholarly and bipartisan approach is the right mix for border policy discussions.

At the turn of the last century, the heart of America was defined by Emma Lazarus's inspiring words affixed to the Statue of Liberty: "Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free."

A century later, the yearning has not changed---nor has America's heart. As last week's tragedy in Texas reminds us, people still risk their lives for the freedom and opportunity America offers. In that case, 18 immigrants died in a suffocating tractor-trailer. Five of the nine suspects are in custody. Our hearts and prayers go out to those men and women who were so cruelly and criminally abandoned by their smugglers.

Immigrants still search for the American Dream. And when they find it, all Americans benefit.

That is because immigrants don't just contribute to our country, they help define our character and they help defend our freedoms. It was Irving Berlin, a Russian/Jewish immigrant who wrote, "God Bless America." And we could not watch "Mr. Smith Goes to Washington," if not for Frank Capra, an Italian-American who rode in steerage to America at age six.

President Bush was right when he said immigrants "make our nation more, not less, American."

Of course, immigrant soldiers also defend our freedoms. And I am proud that our Department has granted citizenship, in some cases posthumously, to several in that war.

We should remember that immigrants and naturalized citizens make up about five percent of our armed forces.

Marine Lance Corporal Jose Gutierrez, a citizen of Guatemala and resident of California died in Iraq, a family member said, "He wanted to give back to a nation that gave him so much. Truly, immigrants have contributed greatly to our nation.

Today, however, we face new and unprecedented dangers. Some who cross our borders do not yearn to breathe free - they yearn to destroy freedom. They do not seek a better life -- but an opportunity to weaken America and to take innocent lives.

On September 11th, 2001, nineteen terrorists took advantage of our welcoming nature ... and took the lives of 3,000 of our fellow citizens - and, I might add, citizens from other nations, too. Many of the 19 hijackers had violated the terms of their visa -- and nearly all had incomplete or incorrect application forms.

It should be noted that one of the hijackers, Hani Hanjour, had violated the terms of his student visa, not showing up to school as required. Another, Mohammed Atta, had overstayed his visa on a previous occasion, and violated his current tourist visa by taking flying lessons. Both could have been stopped by an effective US VISIT system.

Our immigration policies must recognize and reflect this new reality. Congress has directed us to improve the system and make it work. The Department of Homeland Security has a unique opportunity to fulfill that mission. It's never been more important that we do so.

Earlier this month, Secretary Ridge announced that the Department of Homeland Security would meet the deadline given to us by Congress to install an entry-exit system at America's airports and seaports by year's end. This will be done through our US VISIT program.

Today I am pleased to lay out more of the details as to how we will accomplish that goal, and how our US VISIT system will fit into the comprehensive border information system necessary to give America a 21st Century "smart border" -- one that speeds through legitimate trade and travel, but stops terrorists in their tracks.

First, let's look at the system that is needed. Information will be the cornerstone of this effort. Actually, it's always been that way. In 1819, one of America's first immigration laws was passed, requiring that ships' captains provide a list of all passengers brought in on their voyage.

But in the 21st Century, border security can no longer be just a coastline, or a line on the ground between two nations. It's also a line of information in a computer, telling us who is in this country, for how long, and for what reason. We are hiring 1,700 new inspectors and hundreds of Border Patrol Agents.

In the 21st Century, it is not enough to place inspectors at our ports of entry to monitor the flow of goods and people. We must also have a "virtual border" that operates far beyond the land border of the United States.

Under US VISIT, we will eventually have information on our visitors --collected at our consular officers far from our borders -- that will confirm identity, measure security risks and assess the legitimacy of travel of visitors to the U.S.

For people who require visas, those visas will use biometric features that will enable us to identify the visitors when they arrive at an airport or seaport and to access the information about that visitor. This information will be available at our ports of entry as well as throughout our entire immigration enforcement system.

Through this "virtual border," we will know who violates our entry requirements, who overstays or violates the terms of their stay, and who should be welcome again.

In addition, the DHS will, for the first time, oversee the visa issuance process. We'll be responsible for maintaining its integrity, working through and with the consular offices of the U.S. State Department. This unity of border and visa responsibilities will allow for a better flow of information and a coordinated response to immigration violations.

We will also work with State to encourage Visa Waiver countries to use tamper-proof passports that include biometric identifiers as soon as possible -- and to consider security needs first when issuing them.

In fact, Visa Waiver countries are required to use biometrics by 10-26-04 - under Congressional mandate.

As a result, we'll be able to require proof of identification from foreign national visitors to the U.S. We'll do so through a minimum of two biometric identifiers - initially, fingerprints and photographs; later, as the technology is perfected, additional forms such as facial recognition or iris scans may be used as well.

Let me add, biometric technology is not new. More than six million Border Crossing Cards for frequent crossers have been issued in the last five years, each with two fingerprints and a digital photograph embedded on the back.

In fact, a recent pilot program to decode the cards resulted in the capture of 250 impostors trying to cheat the system. We will make sure that the right equipment and training is in place to make it work on a large scale.

The business community knows all about biometrics too, and they've been working long and hard on solutions. As we build US VISIT, we realize that the best solutions will not come from DC, but from entrepreneurs. We cannot secure our borders without the initiative and expertise of the private sector.

And I'm pleased to say that we will work with industry to issue an RFP by no later than this fall.

This is the overall picture - let me explain how the first phase of US VISIT will work.

By January 1st of next year, if a foreign visitor flies into Dulles or JFK or LAX or another international airport or arrives at a U.S. seaport- the visitor's travel documents will be scanned. Then, once a photo and fingerprint are taken, the person will then be checked against lists of those who should be denied entry for any reason – terrorist connections, criminal violations, or past visa violations.

The information requested will include immigrant and citizenship status; nationality; the country of residence; and the person's address while in the United States. Incomplete information will no longer be good enough.

In 99.9 percent of the cases, the visitor will simply be wished a good day and sent on their way. But with that small percentage of "hits," our country will be made much safer, and our immigration system will be given a foundation of integrity that has been lacking for too long.

When that visitor departs, we will verify his or her identity and capture their departure information. This tells the Department of Homeland Security if that person entered legally may have stayed illegally as the 9/11 terrorists did. Currently, there is no way to know when or even if our visitors leave - but under US VISIT, that will change.

US VISIT will not be a static system, but a dynamic one, able to track changes in immigration status and make updates and adjustments accordingly.

For example, if a foreign visitor enters on a 90-day tourist visa but must stay for an emergency medical reason, the system should track it.

Congress has appropriated nearly \$400 million for this year alone to establish it at our airports and seaports.

Our next question is to establish it at the major land ports of entry. We are communicating with Congress and aggressively building our capability to meet the challenge.

Our next challenge is this: how do you handle the massive amount of information that will be generated? That is my next announcement.

The Department of Homeland Security is establishing a new capability within ICE, our Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement – an Office of Compliance. This team of compliance officers will review US VISIT information on visa violations, analyze it and refer appropriate leads to our field enforcement units for investigation.

As information increases, the Office of Compliance must grow the capability to track the cases and refer them, when appropriate, for investigation.

All of this information will become part of a foreign visitor's ongoing travel record, so their correct information can follow them wherever they go. The information will be made available to inspectors, agents, consular officials and others with a true need to know.

Law enforcement will also have access to the information, but only for strictly defined and limited purposes.

Let me assure you: our Department's Privacy Officer, Nuala O'Connor Kelly, will closely monitor the effort to safeguard people's information from misuse.

US VISIT is just the latest step in the DHS's "Information Modernization." In a very brief time, under the leadership of Secretary Ridge, we are making great progress in capturing and sharing information across the entire landscape of homeland security - from border and transportation security to critical infrastructure protection to emergency response.

The common denominator here is integration - making sure our systems, technology, and people are not limited by unnecessary barriers.

Information is worth very little if it's stuck in an agency "stovepipe" or trapped in a maze of outdated technology, where the right people cannot get to it in time to make a difference. US VISIT will coordinate our border information and our enforcement and compliance efforts.

Take, for instance, SEVIS [Student and Exchange Visitor Information System]. SEVIS was designed to let university officials electronically update us on changes in the status of their international students.

It's a powerful tool for combating fraud. To date, nearly 3,000 "no-show" students have been reported to ICE, allowing us to determine whether they have violated the law or pose a security risk. Most do not, of course, but the point is, we cannot rely on guesswork anymore.

Now, some may argue that we're asking for too much information. They may worry that it could intimidate some people and create a chilling effect on immigration.

Nothing could be further from the truth.

We're not here to play "gotcha." We would prefer to see the law obeyed rather than to punish violators. In fact, our compliance officers will be out in the field, helping foreign students and universities learn the rules.

We've also invited experts from science and academia to help us speed up the visa approval process for foreign scholars and teachers who clearly pose no threat. We welcome students, visitors and business travelers.

Ladies and gentlemen, good information does not threaten immigration. Quite the contrary. The more certain we are about someone's status, the less likely we are to make a mistake that would jeopardize their status or our safety.

Securing our borders often comes down to making a decision on the spot, using the best information at hand. The more we are able to identify people and assess them based on their individual traits, the less dependent we are on broad, general categories such as national origin. That makes the system fairer for everyone.

Last week, an al Qaeda leader wrote an e-mail promising a new "guerrilla war" against Saudi Arabia and the United States. "The list of assassinations, the raid teams and the martyr operation squads are ready," he wrote, "the caches of weapons, ammunition, explosives and bombs are plentiful -- and the authorities cannot uncover them."

One day later, an attack in Saudi Arabia killed 34 people, including eight Americans.

The war on terrorism will not end quickly. It will take a sustained national and international effort. But we are ready, not intimidated, and US VISIT will be an important tool. We now have an opportunity to learn from past failures. We must not miss this chance.

[In his campaign], President Bush said, "New Americans are not to be feared as strangers; they are to be welcomed as neighbors."

US VISIT will replace fear with knowledge, protecting Americans while keeping, to borrow again from Emma Lazarus, our "lamp lifted [high] beside the Golden Door."

Thank you.