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BEFORE THE
SENATE APPROPRIATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY
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Chairman Gregg, Ranking Member Byrd, and other distinguished Members, it is a pleasure to appear before you today to discuss the progress the Department of Homeland Security's United States Visitor and Immigrant Status Indicator Technology (US-VISIT) program has made in securing our Nation's borders.

Establishment of the US-VISIT Program

It is the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS or Homeland Security) vision to modernize and improve our immigration and border management system through integration, collaboration, and cooperation among all parts of the immigration and border management community—a community that includes DHS organizations such as Customs and Border Protection (CBP), and the Department of State (DOS or State), among many others. Moreover, it is imperative that these many organizations work together as a single enterprise to accomplish a single mission—coordinating roles, sharing information and technology, complementing and reinforcing one another's business processes, and eliminating redundancies.

DHS created the US-VISIT program in July 2003 to meet statutory requirements and, more broadly, to achieve the following program goals:

- To enhance the security of our citizens and visitors;
- To facilitate legitimate travel and trade;
- To ensure the integrity of our immigration system; and
- To protect the privacy of our visitors

The US-VISIT program is part of a continuum of security measures that begins outside our nation's physical borders. The program is a critical component of DHS's strategies to prevent terrorist attacks on the United States and facilitate the movement of legitimate travel and trade. US-VISIT represents a major achievement in creating an integrated border screening system that enhances our nation's security and our efforts to reform our immigration and border management systems. Through US-VISIT, DHS is increasing our ability to manage the information collected about foreign visitors during the pre-entry, entry, status management, and departure processes, and allows us to conduct better analysis of that information, and thereby strengthens the integrity of our immigration system.

Accomplishments of US-VISIT

DHS deployed US-VISIT on time, within budget, and has met every mandate established by Congress to date, as well as incorporating biometrics (fingerscans and digital photographs) into US-VISIT. The addition of biometrics, coupled with the integration of databases, has contributed to improved decision-making and information sharing across the immigration and border management community. In each of the incremental improvements that have been successfully deployed to date, all of the four goals listed above have been met.

DHS met its first statutory requirement by integrating existing arrival and departure biographic information on December 31, 2003. Subsequently, DHS:

- deployed US-VISIT biometric entry procedures at 115 airports and 14 seaports on January 5, 2004, for those individuals applying for admission with nonimmigrant visas (Since that time, US-VISIT has been deployed to an additional seaport);
- expanded biometric entry procedures to include those individuals applying for admission under the Visa Waiver Program on September 30, 2004;
- supported the deployment of DOS's BioVisa Program, completed in October 2004;
- deployed biometric entry to the 50 busiest land ports by December 29, 2004;
- collects biometrics on exit at 14 pilot locations for travelers departing the United States;
- implemented radio frequency identification technology (RFID) at five sites along the northern and southern land borders to capture entry/exit information, trigger updated watchlist checks, and provide the results of this information in a cohesive form to the CBP officer at entry;
- deployed to all ports of entry the initial capability to compare and authenticate travel documents issued by the United States by October 26, 2005;
- deployed biometric entry capabilities to the remaining 104 land border ports of entry before the Congressionally mandated deadline of December 31, 2005; and
- will deploy reader technology that is capable of accommodating biometrically enabled e-Passports from Visa Waiver Program countries by October 26, 2006.

Enhancing Security and Improving Integrity of the Immigration System

The use of biometric and biographic data provides DOS consular officers, CBP officers, and other immigration and border management officials the information they need to authenticate travel documents; verify identity; and identify criminals, immigration violators, and other individuals who may pose threats to our security or public safety before they can enter the United States. For the overwhelming majority of foreign travelers who are welcome into our country, this same access to data means they can be processed more quickly and more efficiently while their privacy is protected.

Through US-VISIT, DHS has processed approximately 47.6 million travelers at our ports of entry from its inception through January 5, 2006. During this same period, the use of biometrics alone has allowed DHS to intercept more than 1,011 known criminals and immigration law violators—including individuals wanted for murder, rape, drug trafficking, and pedophilia. Two examples:

- Several months ago, CBP officers at Los Angeles International Airport encountered a Swiss national seeking admission as a visa waiver applicant. A US-VISIT fingerscan check by CBP officers revealed that this person was wanted by INTERPOL for suspected pedophilia.
- Prior to US-VISIT, the traveler presented a fraudulent visa to enter the United States more than 60 times using without detection by standard biographic record checks. A routine US-VISIT check by CBP officers at John F. Kennedy International Airport revealed his deception, and further CBP checks found that he had two prior arrests for drug trafficking, a subsequent failure to appear in court and visa fraud.

The use of biometric identifiers – specifically digital fingerscans and photographs – has made travel safer and more secure by identifying individuals attempting to claim other identities. The matching of fingerprints through DOS’s BioVisa Program, which is fully integrated with US-VISIT, against DHS’s biometric watchlist has resulted in 15,200 hits on individuals applying to DOS for visas to come to the United States, to date (January 2004 through January 5, 2006).

Additionally, US-VISIT provides Immigration and Customs Enforcement’s (ICE) Compliance Enforcement Unit with a listing of possible overstays on a weekly basis. This exchange of information has led to the arrest by ICE of 122 individuals (January 2004 through January 5, 2006) who have overstayed the terms of their admission.

Facilitating Travel and Trade

These accomplishments have been achieved without adversely impacting inspection times for the millions of legitimate international travelers who visit the U.S. every year. At some land border ports of entry, automation of former paper processes through US-VISIT procedures have significantly reduced the time it takes for a visitor to obtain a Form I-94 and be admitted into the country. For example, in Laredo, Texas, the Form I-94 issuance process has been reduced from an average of 8 to 11 minutes to just 2 to 5 minutes, even though we have added the collection of biometrics and additional security screening to the process. The Port Director in Nogales, Arizona, James Tong, said that US-VISIT “saved their bacon” by being able to deal effectively with the long lines at his port during the last holiday season thanks to faster processing capabilities.

Protecting the Privacy of Our Visitors

From its beginning, US-VISIT has applied the principles of the U.S. Privacy Act to foreign nationals enrolled in the program. US-VISIT has acted to ensure institutional adherence to privacy regulations and best practices including establishment of a Privacy Office that oversees development of privacy principles and policy, mandatory privacy training for program staff, and a set of checks and procedures to ensure an avenue for redress by the public. The program has published, and regularly updated, a Privacy Impact Assessment and Systems of Record Notices. From more than 47.6 million transactions, the Privacy Office has received approximately 131 requests for redress since the program’s beginning. DHS’s former Chief Privacy Officer Nuala O’Connor Kelly said of US-VISIT, “There’s a program

that's taking a lot of information and they're dealing with it respectfully, accurately and thoughtfully...I think they're a textbook study on how to get it right."

US-VISIT's Continuing Efforts

The Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004, following the 9/11 Commission Report, has called for the completion of a biometric entry and exit system as expeditiously as possible. US-VISIT has undertaken the following additional initiatives:

International Border Management and Cooperation

We are working with foreign governments and private sector entities to establish strong and workable international standards for interoperability. For example, DHS has worked closely with DOS and countries participating in the Visa Waiver Program (VWP) to ensure new passports issued by VWP countries and our Department of State on or after October 26, 2006, will be e-Passports that include an integrated computer chip capable of storing biographic information from the data page, a digital photograph, and future biometric information that can be read by DHS readers.

Further, we are working in concert with Australia, New Zealand, and Singapore to pilot test e-Passport readers. The test began January 15 and will run through the late spring. Australia's immigration minister announced that his country would test a biometric border security system at Sydney's airport. Japan is building a biometric entry system which they have publicly stated will be modeled after US-VISIT. The European Commission published proposals in June 2005, to upgrade the Schengen Information System to include biometric data as well as information on individuals subject to European arrest warrants or extradition, and individuals refused entry to the European Union. Currently, the European Union is collecting fingerscans and digital photographs in several pilot sites comparable to the BioVisa Program.

DHS and US-VISIT are also working closely with our Canadian and Mexican neighbors, largely through the Security and Prosperity Partnership, in bi-national working groups that are helping us create a more consolidated, North American approach to enhancing security and facilitating trade and travel.

International Registered Traveler

International Registered Traveler (IRT) initiatives cover a wide variety of programs, including proposed programs such as a future international trusted traveler program, and ongoing programs on North American borders such as FAST, SENTRI, and NEXUS. For the past year, US-VISIT, in coordination with CBP and the Transportation and Security Administration (TSA), has been working closely with representatives from The Netherlands to develop and test an international registered traveler program that would allow enrolled travelers to pass through inspections more quickly.

Information Sharing Across Agencies

Efforts to support the sharing of alien biometric and biographic information, and integrated alien information systems and processes within the immigration and border management

enterprise have already reaped rewards such as the expansion of US-VISIT databases to include information from DOS, USCIS, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), CBP, ICE, the Department of Defense (DOD), and INTERPOL.

DHS, and the Departments of Justice (DOJ) and DOS are working collaboratively to achieve interoperability between the FBI's Integrated Automated Fingerprint Identification System (IAFIS) and DHS's Automated Biometric Identity System (IDENT).

Departure Confirmation

DHS is examining the results of the current exit pilots at 14 airports and seaports and DHS will determine the best approach for capturing exit data using biometrics and biographic information. We continue to rely on our existing exit process, which are being enhanced now by the implementation of the Advanced Passenger Information System rule.

10-Print Transition and Interoperability

US-VISIT is not a single database or computer network, but rather the bond that ties together several, previously independent databases and watchlists. The benefit of using prior systems, as opposed to starting anew, is that DHS has been able to make marked improvements over a very short period of time.

DHS is progressing towards a seamlessly integrated system that will allow users access to all relevant information in a timely manner to make the right decisions on those individual visitors and immigrants they encounter. The next step is the interoperability of Homeland Security's IDENT with the FBI's IAFIS.

Currently, DHS uses the IDENT two index fingerprint system to collect and match fingerprints of international visitors entering United States and of applicants for visas with the Department of State. This process allows DHS and DOS to conduct watchlist checks and verify that the person appearing before the CBP officer is the same person previously encountered or granted a visa or other travel document.

IDENT/IAFIS interoperability will increase DHS and DOS's ability to screen individuals, increase accuracy of matching, and provide greater ability to match against latent prints. Integration will also benefit the FBI and other law enforcement organizations by providing them with increased access during the interim solution to information on high-risk individuals to whom DOS refused a visa and those whom DHS has expeditiously removed.

On July 13, 2005, the Secretary announced that in the future, first-time visitors to the United States will be enrolled in the program by submitting ten fingerprints. The Administration is developing an implementation plan and associated cost estimates. The plan will address interoperability as well as migration to ten fingerscans. Moving to a 10-fingerscan standard will allow us to be able to identify visitors with even greater accuracy. This will translate into sending fewer people to secondary inspection, allowing us to focus more time and attention on those who might be potential risks to the country. It also allows us to match against additional

watchlist fingerprints including latent prints, and create a common standard of fingerprint capture and use.

Although making both fingerprint databases interoperable may sound simple, it presents a number of challenges. New systems and processes must be developed, and new hardware must be installed at both database storage sites. This must all be done in a manner that maintains the high standards of efficiency, effectiveness, and privacy that we have achieved with the current US-VISIT system.

DHS and DOJ Joint Solutions

During joint meetings this past spring, staff from US-VISIT and the FBI Criminal Justice Information Services (CJIS) Division identified three potential models for making IDENT and IAFIS interoperable. In May 2005, US-VISIT and DOS leaders traveled to Clarksburg, WV to meet with the leadership of the FBI'S CJIS Division. During that meeting, we agreed to guiding principles for interoperability.

These efforts were given additional energy with Secretary Chertoff's announcement that US-VISIT will transition to biometrically screening international visitors using a fingerprint standard of 10-fingerscan capture at enrollment and two-flat finger verification for each subsequent encounter.

An Interoperability Integrated Project Team (IPT) was established in June with FBI'S CJIS Division and State Department's Bureau of Consular Affairs. This team, with representation from the major government stakeholders, will develop the roadmap to successful interoperability. Additionally, USCIS and ICE are two very important stakeholders and are participating actively when preparing for future interoperability.

Our relationship with FBI's CJIS Division has been further strengthened with the addition of US-VISIT Deputy Director, Robert Mocny, as the DHS representative to the FBI's CJIS Division Advisory Policy Board (APB). This signifies a new and improved relationship with FBI's CJIS Division, and participation will hasten progress towards achieving full interoperability and optimize our work with States and localities.

The IPT has agreed upon three phases to achieving interoperability: (1) an interim data sharing model (data sharing solution); (2) initial operating capability (IOC); and (3) full operating capability (FOC).

The interim solution will consist of a prototype (also known as the interim data sharing model) that is a first step towards the new interoperable environment between IDENT and IAFIS. The interim solution will allow for two-way sharing of certain biometric information. FBI will provide information on all wants and warrants. DHS will provide information on expedited removals. State will provide Category 1 visa refusals (e.g., generally one involving a permanent ground of inadmissibility). DHS and FBI's CJIS Division will formally start the first phase on February 1, 2006, and anticipate the interim solution to be implemented over the following six to eight months. This time period will be used to design and build the prototype system.

During the next phase, the initial operating capability (IOC), State and DHS will begin to collect 10 prints; DHS will convert the current two-print DHS IDENT system to store and utilize 10-flat prints in processing. DHS and FBI will establish an infrastructure for exchanging information and search capabilities.

Finally, the full operating capability (FOC) will be achieved about eighteen months after the completion of IOC. The FOC includes full information sharing, subject to controlling laws and policy; high performance searches of biometric data in both IDENT and IAFIS for positive identification; increased matcher performance appropriate to the increased volumes; and more comprehensive biographic / case data sharing.

DHS, along with the Departments of State, Justice, and Defense, as well as the National Institute of Standards and Technology, hosted an industry day to challenge the industry to make a smaller, faster, more accurate 10-print capture device. We are working with industry to help design new capture devices that meet DHS's basic operational requirements at primary inspection. Advances in technology will allow DHS and State to routinely collect 10 slap prints, without negatively impacting the thousands of international visitors that pass through our ports and visa issuing posts every day.

As with previous border security initiatives that involve using biometrics, no one should underestimate the very real and significant technological challenges, including the present realities that include:

- No capture device on the market today can take and process 10 prints in the same timeframe experienced for taking and processing two prints.
- No capture device on the market today can capture 10 prints in less than three slaps (four fingers left, four fingers right, two thumbs), and most require four slaps (four fingers left, four fingers right, left thumb, right thumb). None meet current operational processing requirements for ports of entry, embassies, or consulates.
- When more than one finger is scanned, segmentation of the fingers into individual scans is necessary; this is one of the primary factors that add processing time beyond that experienced today when using single finger scans.
- Finally, the vendor community will need to manufacture sufficient quantities of scanners to respond to this initiative.

IDENT/IAFIS interoperability will provide all users with more information and greater accuracy. Collecting and storing ten-prints on initial encounter (enrollment) will improve the accuracy of matches and provide increased ability to match latent prints, DHS and DOS can then use two prints to verify that the person appearing before them is the same one encountered previously.

IDENT/IAFIS Workstation Deployment

DHS completed deployment of integrated IDENT/IAFIS workstations to all remaining CBP ports of entry and Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) sites by December 31, 2005.

The 2005 deployment focused on the remaining 66 ports of entry as well as the 339 ICE locations.

These workstations allow DHS's users in the field to collect one set of 10-rolled prints and simultaneously transmit them to both IDENT and IAFIS for checks. This functionality is being deployed to improve access to fingerprint and criminal history data for law enforcement purposes.

The IDENT/IAFIS workstations are an important tool for Border Patrol, secondary inspections, and interior enforcement. During these encounters—where DHS already has identified that the individual may not be admissible or may pose a threat—more time can be spent with the individual so that DHS can obtain additional information from both of these biometric watchlist systems that will help in the determination of what actions may be most appropriate.

Conclusion

Since inception, US-VISIT has met all of its goals. DHS and US-VISIT continue to work with the rest of the world to harmonize international border processes and standards for data sharing.

At the same time, these improvements in screening have facilitated legitimate trade and travel. We conducted (and continue to conduct) extensive outreach and public education efforts to ensure that both affected government staff and travelers understood the US-VISIT process and knew what to expect at the borders.

DHS continues to explore departure confirmation alternatives at our air and seaports. US-VISIT is looking at effective ways to utilize RFID at the land ports. In the future, this information could be shared with state and local law enforcement, as appropriate. Through US-VISIT, we are establishing an “enrolled population”— a population that is “known” and for whom risk is assessed through recurrent biometric screening. And from there, we can expand the security and facilitation enhancements provided by DHS and US-VISIT through the development of a registered traveler program to facilitate the travel of known, low-risk individuals.

In closing, I'd like to thank you for your support for the work that has already been accomplished and your future assistance and commitment to the work that lies ahead.