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BEFORE
THE HOUSE HOMELAND SECURITY COMMITTEE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON BORDER, MARITIME, AND GLOBAL COUNTERTERRORISM
REGARDING
“FREQUENT TRAVELER PROGRAMS: BALANCING SECURITY AND COMMERCE
AT OUR LAND BORDERS

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WASHINGTON D.C.

Good morning, Chairwoman Sanchez, Ranking Member Souder, and distinguished Members of the Subcommittee. I am pleased to be here today to outline the steps that the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has taken to provide secure and facilitated processing of travelers and cargo through our land ports of entry. Specifically, I would like to discuss how the “trusted traveler” programs operated by U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) -- including the Secure Electronic Network for Travelers Rapid Inspection (SENTRI), Free and Secure Trade (FAST), and NEXUS programs -- provide for both increased security and facilitation at our land ports of entry.

As America’s frontline border agency, CBP employs highly trained and professional personnel, resources, and law enforcement authorities to discharge our priority mission of preventing terrorists and terrorist weapons from entering the United States. This is an enormous challenge. We have over 7,000 miles of shared borders with Canada and Mexico and 327 official ports of entry, and each day CBP officers must inspect more than 1.2 million passengers and pedestrians. Despite this challenging enforcement reality, CBP has made great strides toward securing America’s borders while facilitating legitimate trade and travel and ensuring the vitality of our economy.

With such a tremendous volume of passengers and pedestrians crossing our borders each day, seconds are of critical importance. An average processing time can take up to 30 seconds, which at first glance may seem insignificant. However, when you multiply that by many thousands, you are left with long delays at our ports of entry and reduced time for our officers to properly perform their duties. CBP’s trusted traveler programs are a critical component of our layered enforcement strategy and help facilitate the crossing of low-risk travelers and commercial truck drivers at the land borders through exclusive, dedicated lanes. Average inspection times are reduced from up to 30 seconds to an average of six to eight seconds.

To achieve low-risk status, program members – of which we currently have over 340,000 -- must submit to intensive background checks against law enforcement and terrorist databases, personal interviews, and the collection of biometrics, and they must provide proof of citizenship and other identity documentation. Applicants will not be granted trusted traveler privileges if they fail to satisfy the requirements as outlined

above. Furthermore, members found in violation of these requirements are subject to revocation of their trusted traveler privileges. Travelers who have been denied entry to, or removed from, the program are still permitted to make entry into the United States; they are simply no longer able to use the dedicated trusted traveler lanes to do so.

It should be noted that every traveler – whether in a trusted traveler program or not – is subject to full inspection upon entry to the United States; however, assigning low-risk status to trusted travelers enables CBP to better focus its time and resources on unknown and higher-risk travelers. In addition to being subject to both full and random inspections, CBP performs a complete database check every 24 hours and upon each trusted traveler's entry into the U.S.

An approved applicant is issued a Radio Frequency Identification (RFID)-enabled card and, in the SENTRI and FAST programs, an accompanying vehicle transponder, which CBP officers are able to read in a matter of seconds upon a traveler's arrival at a port of entry. To ensure the privacy and security of a member's data, all of the personal information is stored securely in IDENT, the Department's biometric database, which is managed by US-VISIT. No personal information is stored on the card, which instead contains only a file number that is transmitted via the RFID reader to CBP's secure database. This is the same technological approach that DHS and the Department of State have proposed as part of the recently published Notice of Proposed Rulemaking for the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative (WHTI), and it will enable CBP to process legitimate travelers more quickly, while maintaining the necessary level of security. Furthermore, under WHTI, all three trusted traveler cards will be considered WHTI compliant and will be accepted from U.S. Citizens and Canadians as border crossing documents at all Ports of Entry.

Enrollment into one of the programs is a two-step process. A written application is filled out and submitted to CBP for biographical background vetting. Database queries are performed against several law enforcement, intelligence, customs, immigration, and terrorist indices. If an applicant passes this stage of review, he or she is asked to schedule an in-person interview with a CBP officer at a local Enrollment Center. At the Enrollment Center the applicant will be fingerprinted, have his or her travel and identity documents verified, and be interviewed by a CBP officer to confirm his or her low-risk status. Enrollment Centers are located throughout the country at land border and air ports of entry and in some urban centers such as Seattle and Vancouver.

Each of our trusted traveler programs was created prior to the creation of DHS -- the SENTRI program in 1995, the NEXUS program in 1999, and the FAST program in 2002. The programs were created disparately, and since a traveler's information was maintained on the database at a specific port of entry, a traveler might be registered in Detroit, but could not use his or her privileges at another location. CBP has taken significant steps in the past years to harmonize all the trusted traveler programs.

CBP has centralized the biographic membership information for the NEXUS and SENTRI programs into a centralized database known as the Global Enrollment System (GES). FAST driver information is in a separate centralized database; however, we are in the process of developing a plan to also merge it into GES. As of last year, members can use their cards nationwide within their respective trusted-traveler programs. For instance, on the Northern border, NEXUS members in Detroit can now use their cards in Buffalo, and on the Southwest border, SENTRI members in San

Ysidro can now use their cards in Laredo. A centralized GES database has also allowed CBP to centralize the vetting process in Williston, Vermont, thereby creating a significantly more efficient and consistent vetting process.

An on-line application for SENTRI applicants became available on November 1, 2006, and an online application for NEXUS applicants likewise became available in late summer 2007. With on-line processing, applicants may register and input their applications electronically, and their information is sent directly to the CBP Centralized Vetting Center in Vermont. Notification messages are returned electronically, and applicants can also check the status of their applications via their on-line account.

The GES has also facilitated consolidating application data requirements across the programs, standardized the risk assessment processes for the programs, and offered better services to the public. CBP has also recently changed the renewal period for SENTRI from 2 years to 5 years, thereby harmonizing the renewal period with the NEXUS and FAST programs.

CBP has instituted a review process to ensure that we are maximizing the security and facilitation benefits of our trusted traveler programs. This process includes yearly site visits to designated program ports of entry and Enrollment Centers to review both the application processing and the inspection process. We have also developed program accountability measures under the CBP Securing America's Borders at Ports of Entry Initiative. These measures include: reduced processing times at NEXUS and SENTRI designated lanes, increased number of program participants, and increased compliance rates of program participants.

All of these efforts – developing an online, paperless application process; centralizing membership information; consolidating application data requirements across the programs; and standardizing the risk assessment processes for the programs have resulted in enrollment and participation into our trusted traveler programs being more convenient and secure than ever.

I would like to take this opportunity to address each of these programs in additional detail.

NEXUS

NEXUS is a binational program with Canada, developed in 1999 under the Shared Border Accord, and is available for people traveling between the United States and Canada via land, air, or private boat. Although originally developed as separate programs, in December 2006, CBP and the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) commenced the process of merging the NEXUS Land, Air, and Marine into a single program, with one card, one application, and one vetting process. The integration was completed in January 2007. The application process usually takes 4-6 weeks, and CBP closely monitors this process to maximize efficiency while ensuring that the necessary security protocols are in place.

ENROLLMENT, LOCATIONS, AND FEES

Members: approximately 133,000

Enrollment Fee: \$50 U.S./\$80 Canadian, split between U.S. and Canada

Enrollment Period: Five Years

Current NEXUS Land Locations

(11 locations; 15 lanes)

Blaine, WA (Pacific Highway) (1)
Blaine, WA (Peace Arch) (1)
Blaine, WA (Point Roberts) (1)
Buffalo, NY (Peace Bridge) (2)
Buffalo, NY, (Rainbow Bridge) (1)
Buffalo, NY (Whirlpool Bridge) (2)
Champlain, NY (1)
Detroit, MI (Ambassador Bridge) (2)
Detroit, MI (Tunnel) (2)
Highgate Springs, VT (1)
Port Huron, MI (1)

Current NEXUS Enrollment Centers

Blaine, WA
Champlain, NY
Detroit, MI
Fort Erie, Canada
Montreal, Canada
Ottawa, Canada
Port Huron, MI
Seattle, WA
Toronto, Canada
Vancouver, Canada (2)
Warroad, MN

Pending NEXUS Enrollment Centers

(Available by August 2008)

Alexandria Bay, NY
Calais, ME
Houlton, ME
International Falls, MN
Pembina, ND
Sault Ste. Marie, MI
Sweetgrass, MT

Urban Enrollment Centers

Seattle, WA*
Vancouver, Canada*

*pilot sites

SENTRI

The Secure Electronic Network for Travelers Rapid Inspection: (SENTRI) program began in 1995 and is available for pedestrians and non-commercial vehicle travelers at select locations along the Southwest border (currently operational at the nine largest Southwest border crossings, with a total of 15 dedicated lanes). As with the NEXUS program, the application process usually takes 4-6 weeks, and CBP closely monitors this process to maximize efficiency while ensuring that the necessary security protocols are in place.

ENROLLMENT, LOCATIONS, AND FEES

Members: approximately 129,000
Enrollment Fee: \$129 per person
Enrollment Period: Five Years

Current SENTRI Locations

(9 Locations; 15 lanes)

Brownsville, TX (Veteran's Bridge) (1)
Calexico, CA (1)
El Paso, TX (Stanton Street) (3)
El Paso, TX (Ysleta) (2)
Hidalgo, TX (1)
Laredo, TX (Lincoln Juarez) (1)
Nogales, AZ (Deconcini) (1)
Otay Mesa, CA (1)
San Ysidro, CA (4)

Current SENTRI Enrollment Centers

Brownsville, TX
Calexico, CA
El Paso, TX
Hidalgo, TX
Laredo, TX
Nogales, AZ
Otay Mesa, CA

FAST

The Free and Secure Trade (FAST) program began in 2002 and is a binational program for pre-approved, low-risk, commercial cargo shipments at designated locations on the Northern and Southern land borders. Trucks using FAST lanes are provided expedited processing of qualifying merchandise. To achieve this preferred status, members of FAST must also be a U.S. Customs-Trade Partnership Against Terrorism (C-TPAT) approved carrier, carry qualifying goods from a C-TPAT approved importer, and the driver must be in the possession of a valid FAST Commercial Driver Card.

Along with CBP, the CBSA jointly administers FAST on the Northern border. CBSA and CBP perform individual background checks on FAST Commercial Driver applicants and conduct joint interviews at ten shared facilities. FAST enrollment is also offered at several Alaska ports upon request and via a portable Enrollment Center used for enrollment fairs. Both the U.S. and Canada must agree to admit a driver to Northern border FAST, since both countries have FAST dedicated lanes with similar benefits

The Mexican government accepts U.S.-issued FAST cards in its counterpart program, "Expres", and supports FAST by monitoring and enforcing exclusive use of FAST dedicated lanes by qualifying shippers, but otherwise it does not participate in the program. FAST cards approved at either the Southern or Northern border are valid for entry into the U.S. At present, processing of FAST applications requires approximately 6 weeks.

ENROLLMENT, LOCATIONS, AND FEES: FAST

Members: approximately 87,000 drivers and over 1,600 commercial carriers

Enrollment Fee: \$50 U.S. or \$80 Canadian, fee split between U.S. and Canada

Enrollment Period: Five Years

Current FAST Locations
(28 Locations)

Northern Border

Alexandria Bay, New York
Blaine, Washington *
Buffalo, New York
Champlain, New York *
Derby Line, Vermont
Detroit, Michigan *
Highgate Springs, Vermont
Houlton, Maine
Massena, New York
Ogdensburg, New York
Oroville, New York
Pembina, North Dakota
Port Huron, Michigan *
Portal, North Dakota
Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan
Sweetgrass, Montana

Southwest Border

Brownsville, Texas *
Calexico, California *
Del Rio, Texas
Douglas, Arizona
Eagle Pass, Texas
El Paso, Texas *
Laredo, Texas *
Nogales, Arizona *
Otay Mesa, California *
Pharr, Texas *
Rio Grande, Texas
San Luis, Arizona
Santa Teresa, New Mexico *
Tecate, California

* Indicates dedicated FAST lane

Current FAST Enrollment Centers

Northern Border

Blaine, WA
Buffalo, NY
Champlain, NY
Derby Line, VT
Detroit, MI
Houlton, ME
Pembina, ND
Port Huron, MI
Portal, ND
Sweetgrass MT

Southwest Border

Brownsville, TX
Calexico, CA
El Paso, TX
Hidalgo, TX
Laredo, TX
Nogales, AZ
Otay Mesa, CA

Madame Chairwoman, Members of the Subcommittee, I have outlined an assortment of programs and initiatives today that, with your assistance, will help DHS continue to protect America from terrorist threats while fulfilling our other important traditional missions. But our work is not complete. With the continued support of the Congress, DHS will succeed in meeting the challenges posed by the ongoing terrorist threat and the need to facilitate ever-increasing numbers of legitimate shipments and travelers. Thank you again for this opportunity to testify. I will be happy to answer any questions you may have.