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Diplomatic Security Adds Assets Forfeiture to Its Investigative Arsenal

The Diplomatic Security forfeiture coordinator received the call on June 21, at 4 P.M.—the bureau had been accepted into the Department of Justice's Assets Forfeiture Fund. It was a moment of triumph for many agents, managers, and specialists of the DS Criminal Division who had worked for the past 9 months assembling and presenting an application into the fund.

As a member of the fund, DS can now strike back at criminals where it hurts the most—their assets. DS can seize any assets a criminal uses or obtains when committing passport or visa fraud. This punishment is in addition to any fines or restitution the criminal may be required to pay.

With fraudulent or illegally obtained U.S. passports and visas selling for as much as \$25,000 on the street, some criminals committing document fraud have amassed millions of dollars in illegal revenue. Now DS can take it away.

“Seizing the assets of criminals will enhance the Bureau of Diplomatic Security's criminal program, sending the message to individuals contemplating committing visa or passport fraud domestically or overseas that we can and will take

away their assets,” said Ambassador Francis X. Taylor, Assistant Secretary for Diplomatic Security. “Asset forfeiture will serve as another deterrent in visa and passport fraud.”

DS was officially able to begin working through the Assets Forfeiture Fund on October 1.

Acceptance into the fund immediately catapults DS into a new level of law enforcement. The DS criminal program anticipates increased national recognition within the federal law enforcement community, enhanced cooperation among foreign, federal, state, and local agencies through the equitable sharing of criminal assets seized through this program, and bolstered revenues for forfeiture-related activities. DS will be reimbursed for reward payments, forfeiture/financial investigative training for DS special agents, and other forfeiture-related expenses.

DS expects to add another legal weapon to its investigative arsenal this year. Enhanced sentencing guidelines for passport fraud are expected to be enacted on November 1. The new guidelines, combined with the new asset forfeiture capability, will dramatically strengthen the DS criminal program. ⚙️

