NEW TECHNOLOGY IMPROVES SECURITY AND FACILITATES U.S. ENTRY PROCESS FOR INTERNATIONAL VISITORS

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) is upgrading its biometric collection technology to more quickly and accurately identify international visitors. This upgrade includes using new, faster fingerprint scanners to collect additional fingerprints from international visitors when they enter the United States.

The new fingerprint scanners are being used at several ports of entry. (See sidebar) By the end of this year most visitors who experience US-VISIT procedures will use the new fingerprint scanners when they enter the United States.

U.S. Department of Homeland Security officers use digital fingerprint scanners to collect up to 10 fingerprints from international visitors in order to identify them efficiently during the entry process.

For more than four years, Department of State consular officers and U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officers have been collecting biometrics—two digital fingerprints and a photograph—from all non-U.S. citizens between the ages of 14 and 79, with some exceptions, when they apply for visas or arrive at U.S. ports of entry.

DHS is upgrading its biometric collection technology from a two- to a 10-fingerprint collection standard for two primary reasons. First, collecting additional fingerprints gives us more information against which to verify a visitor's identity, making the process faster and more accurate. With more fingerprints against which to match, CBP officers can more quickly match the biometrics to say that visitors are who they say they are and do not pose a threat to the United States. But if the person in line is a criminal or immigration violator or requires further questioning, the officer will know this more quickly and remove them from the line for additional screening without delaying legitimate visitors.

Second, collecting more fingerprints increases our system's fingerprint matching accuracy, reducing the possibility that our system will misidentify an international visitor. While this doesn't happen often, reducing mismatches makes travel more efficient for legitimate visitors and enables us to focus our attention on those who pose a risk to the United States.

Ports of Entry Collecting 10 Fingerprints:
Boston Logan International Airport, Chicago O'Hare International Airport, Detroit Metropolitan Wayne County Airport, Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport, Houston's George Bush Intercontinental Airport, Miami International Airport, New York's John F. Kennedy International Airport, Orlando International Airport, San Francisco International Airport, Thousand Islands Bridge and Washington Dulles International Airport.

Why does the United States collect fingerprints, and how does this process benefit international visitors?

The United States collects biometrics because unlike names and dates of birth, which can be changed, biometrics are unique and almost impossible to forge. By using biometrics to establish and verify visitors' identities, we are making international travel more convenient, predictable and secure for legitimate visitors, but difficult, unpredictable and intimidating for criminals, immigration violators and those who want to do harm to the United States.

Collecting biometrics also helps protect visitors against identity theft if their travel documents are lost or stolen. Document fraud and identity theft continue to be a worldwide problem. Since 2001, Interpol has amassed a database of 6.7 million lost or stolen passports, including 2.8 million from Visa Waiver Program countries alone. Using biometrics helps the United States stop criminals and immigration violators, including those using fraudulent identification, from entering the country.

Are other countries using biometrics as a part of the travel process?

Yes. Countries around the world are using biometrics for expedited traveler programs and border security measures. The government of Japan began collecting fingerprints from arriving visitors in 2007. The European Union is building a 10-fingerprint visa-issuance program based on the very successful Eurodac. The United Kingdom is collecting fingerprints from visa applicants, and is testing fingerprint collection at ports of entry. The United Arab Emirates utilizes iris scans as part of its immigration and border control processes.

As countries continue developing consistent, compatible biometric systems, we will be able to more accurately identify criminals and immigration violators, making the world a place in which legitimate international travel will be convenient, predictable and secure, but difficult, unpredictable and intimidating for those who want to do us harm.

What are international visitors required to do when departing the United States?

Currently, when leaving the United States, international visitors need to return their Form I-94 (Arrival-Departure Record) or Form I-94W to an airline or ship representative or CBP officer prior to departure. By returning the form, international visitors complete the U.S. entry-exit process and help the United States verify they have complied with the terms of admission of their stay. However, in the future international visitors will be required to provide biometrics when departing the United States. International visitors will be notified about the new requirements, which are expected to take effect in 2009 at U.S. airports and seaports. Implementing biometric exit procedures at land border ports poses many unique challenges. DHS continues to research options and cost estimates to ensure that any new procedures will not negatively impact the economy, the environment or traveler safety.

What U.S. government agency is responsible for the upgrade from two- to 10-fingerprint collection?

DHS's US-VISIT program provides U.S. visa-issuing posts and ports of entry with the biometric technology that enables the U.S. government to establish and verify international visitors' identities. US-VISIT, in cooperation with CBP, is leading the transition from two- to 10-fingerprint collection.

How does US-VISIT keep international visitors' personal information, including biometrics, private and secure?

US-VISIT is vigilant about protecting the data it collects and about ensuring the integrity of that data. In fact, protecting the privacy of international visitors is one of the program's four core goals. US-VISIT's privacy policies extend to non-U.S. citizens most of the same privacy protections given by law to U.S. citizens.

In fact, US-VISIT has a dedicated privacy officer, who is responsible not only for ensuring compliance with privacy laws and procedures, but also for creating a culture within the program where privacy is inherently valued, treated as a fundamental right and obligation, and fully considered in US-VISIT's planning and development processes.

If I believe the system has inaccurate information about me, how can I have this reviewed and corrected? And, how long does this process take?

Travelers can inquire about their personal data or resolve travel-related screening issues through DHS's Traveler Redress Inquiry Program (DHS TRIP). To initiate an inquiry regarding your personal data, please log on to DHS TRIP's interactive Web site *www.dhs.gov/trip*. There you will be prompted to describe your particular concerns and experience, provide contact information to which a response will be directed and be assigned a case number to help you monitor the progress of your inquiry. Information required includes:

- Full name as listed in your passport and/or visa
- Passport/visa number and country of issuance
- Mailing address
- Contact information (e-mail, telephone number)
- Date and place of birth
- Date of arrival and/or departure from United States
- U.S. port of entry (arrival/departure)
- Name of airline or sea vessel
- Airline flight number or cruise line ticket number
- U.S. visa number

DHS TRIP will process your request completely and accurately as quickly as possible after we receive any required supporting paperwork for the appropriate forms. After filing online, you will be asked to provide supporting documentation within 30 days. We encourage you to submit your additional documentation well before the 30 day deadline to facilitate the processing of your request. You may check the status of your request at any time through the Web site *www.dhs.gov/trip*.

You may also direct similar inquiries to the US-VISIT Privacy Officer, US-VISIT Program, Department of Homeland Security, Washington, DC 20528 or at *usvisitprivacy@dhs.gov*.

How is US-VISIT educating international visitors about these procedures?

US-VISIT understands the critical role that communications play in avoiding confusion and clarifying misperceptions. To date, the program has engaged media, stakeholders and other important audiences from around the world through participation at nearly 500 events in 26 countries; developed a variety of public education materials in 15 languages; and worked closely with government and private sector partners to ensure widespread reach to travelers around the world.

US-VISIT is committed to continuing this kind of outreach as it transitions to 10-fingerprint collection. As each of the airports begin collecting 10 fingerprints, US-VISIT and CBP are conducting aggressive media outreach to educate international visitors arriving at these airports and are continuing to collaborate with industry in international markets to disseminate educational materials.

To help industry communicate this change, US-VISIT has developed a comprehensive suite of consumer-friendly educational materials that inform international visitors about U.S. biometrics-based entry procedures.

To assist in planning continued outreach, US-VISIT would like to know what the travel industry is hearing from media and travelers in international markets about U.S. biometric border security measures. To provide feedback or to request educational materials, e-mail *Kimberly.Weissman@dhs.gov*. More information about US-VISIT is also available at *www.dhs.gov/us-visit*. You can also subscribe to receive important announcements about the program by e-mailing *subscribeusvisit@dhs.gov*.