

HOMELAND SECURITY



Highlights of [GAO-05-202](#), a report to the Subcommittees on Homeland Security, Senate and House Committees on Appropriations

**Some Progress Made, but Many Challenges Remain on U.S. Visitor and Immigrant Status Indicator Technology Program**

**Why GAO Did This Study**

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has established a program—the U.S. Visitor and Immigrant Status Indicator Technology (US-VISIT)—to collect, maintain, and share information, including biometric identifiers, on selected foreign nationals who travel to the United States. By congressional mandate, DHS is to develop and submit for approval an expenditure plan for US-VISIT that satisfies certain conditions, including being reviewed by GAO. Among other things, GAO was asked to determine whether the plan satisfied these conditions and to provide observations on the plan and DHS’s program management.

**What GAO Recommends**

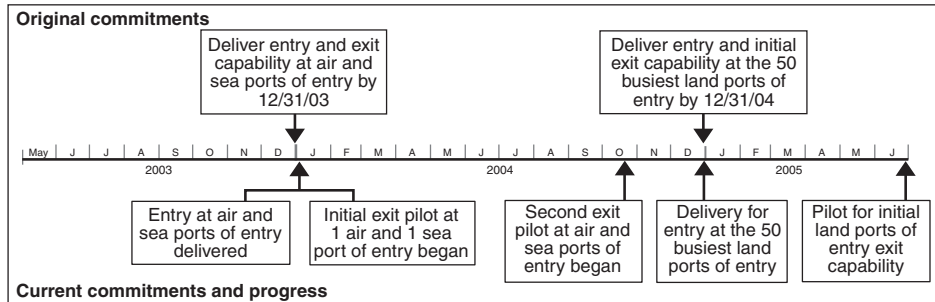
To better ensure that the US-VISIT program is worthy of investment and is managed effectively, GAO is reiterating its previous recommendations and is making several new recommendations, including that DHS fully disclose in future expenditure plans its progress against previous commitments and that it reassess plans for deploying an exit capability. DHS concurred with GAO’s findings and recommendations.

**What GAO Found**

DHS’s fiscal year 2005 expenditure plan and related documentation at least partially satisfied all conditions established by the Congress, including meeting the capital planning and investment control requirements of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). For example, DHS has developed a plan and a process for developing, implementing, and institutionalizing a program to manage risk.

In its observations about the expenditure plan and DHS’s management of the program, GAO recognizes accomplishments to date and addresses the need for rigorous and disciplined program practices. For example, US-VISIT has acquired the services of a prime integration contractor to augment its ability to complete US-VISIT. However, DHS has not employed rigorous, disciplined processes typically associated with successful programs, such as tracking progress against commitments. More specifically, the fiscal year 2005 plan does not describe progress against commitments made in previous plans (e.g., capabilities, schedule, cost, and benefits). According to GAO’s analysis, delays have occurred in delivering capability to track the entry and exit of persons entering the United States at air, land, and sea ports of entry; the figure compares original and current commitments in this effort, as well as progress in delivering capability. Such information is essential for oversight.

**DHS Fiscal Year 2003 and 2004 Commitments Compared with Current Commitments and Reported Progress in Delivering Capabilities**



Source: US-VISIT, GAO (analysis).

Additionally, the effort to pilot alternatives for delivering the capability to track the departure of persons exiting the United States is faced with a compressed time line, missed milestones, and potentially reduced scope. In particular, the pilot evaluation period has been reduced from 3 to 2 months, and as of early November 2004, the alternatives were deployed and operating in only 5 of the 15 ports of entry scheduled to be operational by November 1, 2004. According to US-VISIT officials, this is largely due to delays in DHS granting security clearances to the civilian employees who would operate the equipment at the ports of entry. These changing facts and circumstances surrounding the pilot introduce additional risk concerning US-VISIT’s delivery of promised capabilities and benefits on time and within budget.

[www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-05-202](http://www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-05-202).

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Randolph C. Hite at (202) 512-3439 or hiter@gao.gov.