STATEMENT OF DONNA A. BUCELLA
DIRECTOR, TERRORIST SCREENING CENTER,
BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY
AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

PASSPORT INFORMATION SHARING WITH DEPARTMENT OF STATE

June 29, 2005

Good morning Chairman Collins, Ranking Member Lieberman, and members of the Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to discuss the mission and objectives of the Terrorist Screening Center (TSC) as they relate to information sharing with the Department of State (DOS).

Homeland Security Presidential Directive 6 (HSPD-6), issued on September 16, 2003, ordered the creation of the TSC, directing its operations to begin on December 1, 2003. The TSC was created to consolidate the United States Government's approach to screening for known and suspected terrorists and to provide for the appropriate and lawful use of terrorist information in this process. The TSC ensures that government investigators, screeners, federal agents, and state and local law enforcement officers have ready access to the most thorough, accurate and current information they need in order to respond quickly when a known or suspected terrorist is encountered here in the United States (US), at our borders and at our embassies.

Today, I will tell you about our daily operations as they relate to information sharing with the US DOS and specifics about our new role in their passport fraud detection program.

TSC Operations

The TSC is one of the most unique entities ever conceived or implemented to support terrorist screening and law enforcement operations. It envelops a wide range of expertise borne from a combined onsite representation of the Department of Justice (DOJ), Department of Homeland Security (DHS), the Department of Defense (DoD) and the Department of State (DOS). TSC has consolidated terrorist identities, domestic and international, in one database that is accessible to any federal, state, local, tribal or territorial law enforcement officer, as well as some foreign governments with whom the United States (US) has information sharing agreements. The TSC allows consolidated and coordinated terrorist screening at US Embassies, at the land and air borders of the US, through routine law enforcement encounters domestically, and by other countries with whom we have agreements. The TSC has created a bridge between the intelligence community (IC) and the law enforcement community to facilitate real time information sharing based on daily terrorist encounters. The TSC also has enabled real time information sharing that alerts the DoD to emerging and potential threats to the US from terrorists who are using commercial air carriers.

Since December 1, 2003, TSC has been providing key resources for screeners and law enforcement personnel. These include: (1) a single coordination point for terrorist screening data; (2) a 24/7 call center for encounter identification assistance; (3) access to a coordinated law enforcement response; (4) a formal process for tracking encounters; (5) feedback to the appropriate entities; and (6) a process to address misidentification issues.

The TSC has consolidated the names of all known or suspected terrorists within the Terrorist Screening Database (TSDB). The TSDB is fed from two primary sources: international terrorist (IT) information from the National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC) and domestic terrorist (DT) information from the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). The TSDB has the names of all known and suspected terrorists in the twelve databases described in the April 2003 GAO report entitled, "Information Technology: Terrorist Watch Lists Should Be Consolidated to Promote Better Integration and Sharing." The twelve databases that are currently incorporated into TSC are:

1. Consular Lookout and Support System (CLASS) – DOS
2. TIDE – National Counterterrorism Center
3. Interagency Border Inspection System (IBIS) – Department of Homeland Security
4. No-Fly – Department of Homeland Security
5. Selectee - Department of Homeland Security
6. National Automated Immigration Lookout System (NAILS) - Department of Homeland Security migrated to Treasury Enforcement Communication System (TECS)
7. Warrant Information - Department of Justice
8. Violent Gang and Terrorist Organization File (VGTOF) - Department of Justice
9. Interpol Terrorism Watch List - Department of Justice
10. Air Force Top Ten Fugitive List - Department of Defense
11. Automated Biometric Identification System – Department of Homeland Security
12. Integrated Automated Fingerprint Identification System – Department of Justice

The key to the success of the TSC's mission was to ensure information housed at the TSC was available to its customers, including the DOS. The TSC has partnered onsite with DOS since HSPD-6 was issued and established four fundamental forms of collaborative processes including: (1) Visa Security Advisory Opinion review; (2) Visa revocation review; (3) nominations to CLASS used by visa consular officers; and (4) implementing screening agreements with certain foreign governments.

DOS consular officers are our first line of defense in keeping known and suspected terrorists out of the US by denying visas to these individuals. The TSC works hand-in-hand with the Bureau of Consular Affairs on these issues. In this regard, DOS assignees at the TSC are continuing the work of reviewing visa applications against the TSDB, a

process handled through the generation of Security Advisory Opinions. Since December 1, 2003, when the TSC began operations, DOS assignees and their staff at the TSC have reviewed over 138,000 Security Advisory Opinion requests to determine if the visa applicants were possible matches with individuals in the TSDB. For example, in December 2004, an individual with links to a terrorist organization applied for a visa at a US consulate. In this case, consular officials denied the visa based on the TSC's analysis that the individual was a match to a known or suspected terrorist in the TSDB. On a separate occasion, the same process applied to a senior member of a terrorist organization based overseas. His visa was also denied.

New identities entered in the TSDB are checked against the Consular Affairs Consolidated Consular Database (CCD) to determine if those new entries had been issued visas before the derogatory information surfaced. The TSC has alerted the DOS of the need to review about 850 cases for possible visa revocation.

DOS specialists assigned to the TSC play an important role in the TSDB nominations process. The specialists ensure individuals nominated for inclusion in the TSDB are thoroughly reviewed. Additionally, the specialists ensure data is securely exported to the Consular Lookout and Support System (CLASS). CLASS is used by DOS consular officers at embassies and consulates for visa adjudication.

The DOS and TSC work together to enhance foreign government cooperation and participation in terrorist screening information agreements. The US has agreements in place with Australia and Canada for the purpose of sharing terrorist screening information to protect the US against terrorist attack. On April 19, 2005, the President formally approved the HSPD-6 report that designated the TSC as an implementing partner for any foreign sharing agreement that is negotiated by the DOS.

The screening of US citizen passport applications, a highlight of a May 2005 GAO report entitled "Improvements Needed to Strengthen US Passport Fraud Detection Efforts," is a collaborative initiative that began in late January 2005 when it was formally proposed by the DOS to the TSC. DOS and TSC immediately began discussions in early February 2005 to establish a screening agreement that aims to ensure the relevant federal agencies are aware when a US Person listed in the TSDB applies for a new, renewed, or amended US passport. A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between DOS and TSC to govern this arrangement is close to finalization. The TSC looks forward to continued cooperation with the DOS in this project, one in the myriad of other collaborative efforts the TSC has entered into with the DOS since HSPD-6 was issued.

Conclusion

Since HSPD-6 was issued on September 16, 2003, the TSC and the DOS have been partnering to protect our nation's security through the robust sharing of terrorist information. The TSC has provided support to those functions identified by the DOS as priorities, and will continue to share information with the DOS as mandated by HSPD-6. This close and continuing cooperation contributes to nationwide efforts to keep terrorists

out of the US and locate those who may already be in the country. I would be happy to answer your questions.

The TSC thanks the Committee for the opportunity to provide clarity to this matter and looks forward to continued work with the Committee in the TSC's efforts to consolidate the Government's approach to terrorism screening.