



United States Department of State
Bureau of Diplomatic Security



DIPLOMATIC SECURITY SERVICE

A Global Law Enforcement Agency



INVESTIGATIVE

The U.S. Department of State's Diplomatic Security Service (DSS) is the sole federal law enforcement agency with statutory responsibility for protecting the integrity of U.S. passport and visas. As our nation navigates a new era of security in the post-September 11 world, the authenticity of these travel documents becomes a significant priority in the mission to defend U.S. borders and protect our national interests, both at home and abroad.

DSS special agents have the authority to arrest individuals for violations of relevant passport and visa statutes and to conduct investigations of crimes that occur overseas on U.S. Government property.

RESPONSIBILITIES

DSS special agents have conducted international document fraud investigations for the past 85 years.

The Diplomatic Security Service is the premier global law enforcement agency—its agents are posted at U.S. embassies and consulates around the world and have the capability to coordinate with foreign police authorities. This pamphlet will depict the nature of DSS criminal investigations and provide examples of the Diplomatic Security Service's ability to work effectively with U.S. and foreign police agencies in fighting international crimes that, regardless of where they are committed, undermine the national security of the United States.

INTERNATIONAL



DOCUMENT FRAUD



PASSPORT FRAUD

A passport is a government-issued travel document that certifies the identity and citizenship of the person to whom it is issued. Passport fraud is committed when an individual fraudulently applies for, uses, possesses, or manufactures a passport of any nation. The most common instances of passport fraud occur when an individual applies for a passport using false documentation, or when a person possesses a photo-substituted passport originally issued to another individual.

The DSS Passport Fraud Branch supports criminal investigations conducted by agents in DSS offices across the United States and in embassies throughout the world in order to uphold the integrity of the U.S. passport as an internationally respected travel document. Generally, passport fraud is not an end unto itself but is often a means to carry out more serious criminal activities including financial fraud, narcotics trafficking, identity theft, and terrorism. Passport fraud is a federal felony punishable by up to 10 years in prison, 15 years if the offense is related to narcotics trafficking, and 20 years if related to acts of international terrorism.

In an average year, the Diplomatic Security Service arrests about 500 individuals for passport fraud—from illegal aliens to narcotics traffickers to murderers.



In Colorado, an American citizen applied for four U.S. passports over a 5-year period—each time presenting identity documents under the name of a one-time friend and business associate.

Through conversations with the FBI and local California authorities, DSS special agents were able to confirm that the individual fraudulently applying for passports was the subject of a homicide investigation in California. The individual was located in the Philippines, arrested by Philippine authorities, and deported the next day. Local California authorities worked with the DSS and the U.S. Attorney's Office to establish the federal passport fraud charges, while local prosecutors continued to build the homicide case.

VISA FRAUD

A visa is a stamp or document affixed in a passport by the government of a country an individual wishes to visit. The visa allows the traveler to apply to enter that country for a specific purpose (i.e., work, education, or tourism). Visa fraud is the fraudulent obtaining, use, manufacture, or illegal sale of a visa. Similar to passport fraud violations, visa fraud is a federal felony offense punishable by up to 10 years in prison, 15 years if related to narcotics trafficking, and 20 years if related to acts of international terrorism.

Resulting from the events of September 11, and combined with the critical emphasis currently placed on border security, the Diplomatic Security Service has substantially increased its resources to investigate visa fraud, conducting domestic and international investigations of document vendors, alien smuggling rings, and other corrupt activities that threaten our nation's borders. The DSS Visa Fraud Branch has investigated scores of individuals who have entered the United States with fraudulently obtained visas facilitated by criminal organizations or through bribery. These illegal visa recipients may have terrorist links and, as witnessed on September 11, could pose a serious threat to our national security.

DSS agents have arrested individuals each year as a result of often highly complex visa fraud investigations.



In one such investigation, Operation Eagle Strike, DSS agents investigated the illegal issuance of U.S. visas to over 70 unqualified recipients at the U.S. Embassy in Doha, Qatar. Possible terrorism connections of some of the known visa recipients prompted a nationwide manhunt by DSS and the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), resulting in the arrest of 49 individuals in the United States and overseas by DSS agents.



In another visa fraud investigation, DSS agents conducted a major operation at the U.S. Consulate in Nuevo Laredo, Mexico, targeting employees involved in selling visas to prior refusals and criminally deported aliens. Over a 5-day period, a DSS investigative team suspended operations at the consulate, interviewed numerous employees and local guards, and arrested five individuals, all of whom would later plead guilty to visa fraud charges.

COORDINATION WITH OTHER LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES

In addition to passport and visa fraud investigations, the Diplomatic Security Service plays a leading role in assisting other local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies with investigations overseas. Hundreds of investigative leads are conducted on behalf of law enforcement agencies every year by DSS agents serving as regional security officers (RSOs) at U.S. embassies and consulates. On the homefront, the DSS Criminal Investigative Liaison Branch assists law enforcement agencies in coordinating with DSS agents overseas on fugitive investigations, cases involving U.S. Government personnel abroad, and other investigative activities with an overseas nexus.

Spearheaded by the Criminal Investigative Liaison Branch, DSS maintains successful partnerships with the U.S. Marshals Service (USMS) and Interpol, and has provided valuable assistance in locating and returning high-profile U.S. fugitives. In the last 2 years, the partnership between DSS and the USMS has led to the capture over 60 wanted U.S. fugitives.



In October 2002, the Manhattan District Attorney's Office contacted the DSS Criminal Investigative Liaison Branch requesting assistance in verifying a birth certificate from Guyana. The birth certificate was being used to confirm the identity of an individual who allegedly perished in the September 11 attacks on the World Trade Center. The birth certificate was forwarded by DSS to the regional security officer at the U.S. Embassy in Georgetown, Guyana, who received notice that the birth certificate was fraudulent. DSS sent the Guyanese Register General's official notification to the Manhattan District Attorney, who later noted that this evidence amounted to a "smoking gun" in the prosecution of an individual attempting to financially benefit from the September 11 attacks.



The Criminal Investigative Liaison Branch was advised that a wanted American citizen applied for a new U.S. passport at the U.S. Consulate General in Amsterdam. Further investigation revealed that the American was wanted on narcotics charges in West Virginia. DSS coordinated with the State Department's Bureau of Consular Affairs, USMS, the regional security officer at the U.S. Embassy in The Hague, and Dutch law enforcement agencies to arrest the subject as he returned to pick up his passport.



DSS coordinated with the USMS and the Georgia Bureau of Investigations in the capture and deportation of a former Georgia State Senator wanted on charges of financially defrauding his constituents in the 1990s. The fugitive was first spotted in Cuba and resurfaced in the Bahamas a month later. DSS quickly contacted the RSO in Nassau, who arranged to have the Bahamian immigration authorities detain him and review his travel documents. As the fugitive could not produce any documentation, he was promptly taken into custody and deported. He was turned over to the Georgia Bureau of Investigations upon his arrival in Atlanta.

CONTACTING THE DIPLOMATIC SECURITY SERVICE

DSS is ready to assist federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies with investigations involving travel documents, overseas investigative assistance, or wanted fugitives who may have fled the United States. The DSS Criminal Investigations Division in the Washington, DC, area and DSS offices located in the following cities are available to accept inquiries from other agencies on matters involving a nexus with international criminal activities.

Criminal Investigations Division	(703) 312-3536
Visa Fraud	(703) 312-3514
Passport Fraud	(703) 312-3527
Criminal Investigative Liaison	(703) 312-3541
Computer Investigations & Forensics	(703) 312-3501
DSS Command Center	(202) 647-7277

DSS FIELD AND RESIDENT OFFICES

Atlanta Resident Office	(404) 331-3521
Boston Field Office	(617) 565-8200
Bridgeport Resident Office	(203) 579-5701
Charleston Satellite Office	(843) 746-1906
Chicago Field Office	(312) 353-6163
Dallas Resident Office	(214) 767-0700
Denver Resident Office	(303) 236-2781
Greensboro Resident Office	(336) 547-4292
Honolulu Resident Office	(808) 541-2854
Houston Field Office	(713) 209-3482
Los Angeles Field Office	(213) 894-3290
Miami Field Office	(305) 536-5781
New Orleans Resident Office	(504) 589-2010
New York Field Office	(201) 944-3787
Philadelphia Resident Office	(215) 861-3370
Phoenix Resident Office	(602) 364-7842
Portsmouth Satellite Office	(603) 334-0519
San Diego Resident Office	(619) 557-6194
San Francisco Field Office	(415) 705-1176
San Juan Resident Office	(787) 766-5704
St. Louis Resident Office	(314) 539-2721
Seattle Resident Office	(206) 220-7721
Washington Field Office	(571) 226-9300
West Los Angeles Resident Office	(310) 235-7937