

Joint Statement for the Record

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Chairman Thompson, Ranking Member King, Members of the Committee – Good Morning. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you to discuss the National Protection and Programs Directorate (NPPD) and the movement of US-VISIT into this new Directorate.

Secretary Chertoff and the Department continue to make progress in many areas. Our mission is straightforward and guided by four goals:

Goal 1. Protect our Nation from Dangerous People

Goal 2. Protect our Nation from Dangerous Goods

Goal 3. Protect Critical Infrastructure

Goal 4. Build a Nimble, Effective Emergency Response System and a Culture of Preparedness

In an interconnected and interdependent global economy, managing risk requires adaptability to a wide range of individual scenarios. These scenarios create a very complex risk environment when it comes to protecting America. The risk environment is dynamic and our approach to managing this risk environment must be equally dynamic.

Our approach is focused on the most significant risks; we apply resources in the most practical way possible to prevent, protect against, and respond to manmade and natural hazards. That means making tough-minded assessments and recognizing that it is simply not possible to eliminate every threat to every individual in every place at every moment. Discipline is required to assess threats, review vulnerabilities, and weigh consequences; we then have to balance and prioritize our resources against those risks so that we can ensure that our Nation is protected.

Decades of experience in dealing with natural disasters have provided sufficient data to understand their risk. By contrast, there have been far fewer terrorist events within the United States, making our comprehension of risk less encompassing.

We must continue to guard against infiltration of this country by international terrorists who have the capability and intent to cause damage to our people and our economy. The most recent illustration of this kind of a scenario is the plot in London that was uncovered last summer. Had it been successful, it would have cost the lives of hundreds of people and could have dealt a significant blow to the functioning of our entire system of international trade and travel.

We have to recognize that there are individuals who sympathize with terrorist organizations or embrace their ideology and who are prepared to use violence as a means to promote a radical, violent agenda. To minimize this potential emerging threat, we have to work across Federal, State, and local jurisdictions to prevent domestic terrorism.

Risk is interdependent and interconnected and must be managed accordingly. For example, a port closure will not only have an impact on a given port area, but also on manufacturing facilities thousands of miles away that depend on the timely delivery of materials. One of the best examples of this interdependency is petroleum refinery capacity along the Gulf Coast following Hurricane Katrina. The day before Hurricane Katrina, facilities in Houston, Texas, produced 25 percent of the Nation's petroleum. The day after Hurricane Katrina, with the facilities closed along the Gulf Coast, these same facilities were producing 47 percent of the

Nation's petroleum. This example demonstrates how significant supply chain interdependencies are in managing a full range of risk. So we understand that managing risk requires us to look at a broad continuum across a wide geographical area.

The National Protection and Programs Directorate is being created so that the United States is better prepared to meet these challenges.

NPPD Mission and Overview

The main responsibility of the NPPD is to advance the Department's risk-reduction mission. To achieve this goal, the NPPD protects infrastructure through the identification of threats and vulnerabilities. It develops risk-mitigation strategies and defines and synchronizes Departmental doctrine for protection initiatives that involve significant coordination and integration of efforts among our Federal counterparts and partners in the State, local, tribal, and private sector communities. The Department's ability to identify and assess risks to the Nation depends to a significant degree on its capacity to detect and evaluate threats to the United States.

Threats posed by individuals wishing to do the Nation harm generally fall into two categories: physical and virtual. Reducing risk requires an integrated approach that encompasses these physical and virtual threats, as well as the human elements that pose those threats. Currently, there are multiple components within DHS working independently to reduce our comprehensive risk. Three of these are:

- The Office of Infrastructure Protection (IP), which addresses physical risks;
- The Office of Cyber Security and Communications (CS&C), which addresses cyber risks; and
- US-VISIT, which addresses human risks.

All three of these offices use the same approach to reduce risk by utilizing data gathering, data analysis, and dissemination of information to operators.

DHS believes that it can increase the synergies between, and improve the output of, the aforementioned offices by not only recognizing their commonalities, but also integrating their work more closely.

All these programs are flexible, critical resources that can be leveraged by any agency within DHS. This structure promotes information sharing and integration, both of which are key to the Department's long-term strategy for developing a unified immigration and border management enterprise. Expanding access to US-VISIT's identity management services supports three of the NPPD's critical missions:

- Fostering stronger and better integrated national approaches among key strategic homeland security activities;
- Protecting the Nation's critical infrastructure, both physical and virtual; and
- Enhancing the security of our citizens and visitors by facilitating legitimate travel with appropriate safeguards.

The US-VISIT Program

The US-VISIT program was created in response to a congressional mandate for an entry/exit system. In the beginning, it expended considerable effort to support the Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officers responsible for screening travelers applying for admission into the United States, as well as the Department of State consular officers who issue visas. However, US-VISIT has expanded its role and now provides significant support to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS), Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG), and other DHS components; the Department of Justice; and the intelligence community.

The US-VISIT program is leading one of the Department's key initiatives—the transition from 2-print to 10-print capture and interoperability, an initiative that will include not only the Department of Justice, but State and local law enforcement entities as well.

US-VISIT is supporting DHS' goals of promoting international information sharing and screening by working with other countries that are currently developing, or interested in developing, their own biometrics-based systems. Close ties with the Department of State and its BioVisa Program are also extending the boundaries of the United States beyond the country's physical borders, to the point where the biometrics of all visa applicants are collected and used for risk and threat assessment purposes long before those individuals enter our country.

These myriad efforts do not divorce US-VISIT from its initial purpose; rather, they allow the program to fulfill its potential as an identity management services program. US-VISIT provides the capability for agencies with immigration and border management responsibilities to establish an individual's identity through the capture of biometric information and its association with biographic information. US-VISIT enables the enrollment and subsequent verification of an individual's identity at any point within the immigration and border management process. Through identity management, decision-makers will be able to access information (appropriate to their business needs) that is associated with any one individual, including results of watch list and criminal background checks.

By increasing the number of individuals known to the United States (and to our allies), we are allowing our governments to focus precious time and resources on unknown individuals and those who may wish to do us harm. Thus, the inclusion of US-VISIT with other risk-reduction activities will increase the program's ability to serve as a risk-reduction service provider across the Department as a whole.

Closing

When Congress passed legislation to create the Department of Homeland Security, it sent a clear message that bureaucratic turf battles and programmatic "stove piping" needed to stop. The solution to the protection of the homeland was a single entity empowered with a broad, cooperative outlook to address the challenges that face our Nation. With its mission to support

all DHS components and Executive Branch agencies, the NPPD is exactly the kind of post-9/11 cooperative thinking that Congress called for when it authorized the creation of DHS.

Let me assure the Committee that all of the benefits to border security which US-VISIT has brought to CBP and other agencies responsible for protecting our Nation will continue to be delivered by the new reporting structure. US-VISIT and its biometric identity management capabilities will continue to be available to all DHS components.

I would like to thank the Committee for its time today, and I welcome your perspective on the themes I have articulated.