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DHS Begins Collecting 10 Fingerprints From International Visitors At Washington Dulles International Airport

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The U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) is now collecting additional fingerprints from international visitors arriving at Washington Dulles International Airport (Dulles). The change is part of the department's upgrade from two- to 10-fingerprint collection in order to enhance security and fingerprint matching accuracy.

"Anyone who's watched the news or seen crimes solved on television shows can appreciate the power of biometrics," said Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff. "They help the legitimate traveler proceed more quickly while protecting their identity and enable our frontline personnel to focus even greater attention on potential security risks. Biometrics tell the story that the unknown terrorist tries to conceal, and it causes them to question whether they've ever left a print behind."

Department of State (DOS) consular officers and DHS Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officers collect biometrics—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. The department's US-VISIT program checks this data against a joint Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)-DHS watch list of criminals, immigration violators and known or suspected terrorists. Watch list data comes from several sources, in particular the Department of Defense (DOD), FBI, DHS and other federal, state and local law enforcement agencies.

Checking biometrics against these databases helps officers make visa determinations and admissibility decisions. It also improves the department's ability to compare a visitor's fingerprints against latent fingerprints collected by DOD and the FBI from known and unknown terrorists all over the world.

Dulles became the first port of entry to collect additional fingerprints from visitors on November 29. Nine other ports of entry will begin 10-fingerprint collection during the next few months, and the 278 remaining ports will begin this process by the end of 2008. This announcement is the result of an interagency partnership among DHS, FBI, DOD and DOS.

The next ports scheduled to collect 10 fingerprints from international visitors are: Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport; Boston Logan International Airport; Chicago O'Hare International Airport; San Francisco International Airport; George Bush Houston Intercontinental Airport; Miami International Airport; Detroit Metropolitan Wayne County Airport; Orlando International Airport; and New York's John F. Kennedy International Airport.

US-VISIT, in cooperation with CBP, is leading the transition to a 10-fingerprint collection standard. Since US-VISIT began in 2004, DHS has used biometric identifiers to prevent the use of fraudulent documents, protect visitors from identity theft, and stop thousands of criminals and immigration violators from entering the country.

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