



**Homeland  
Security**

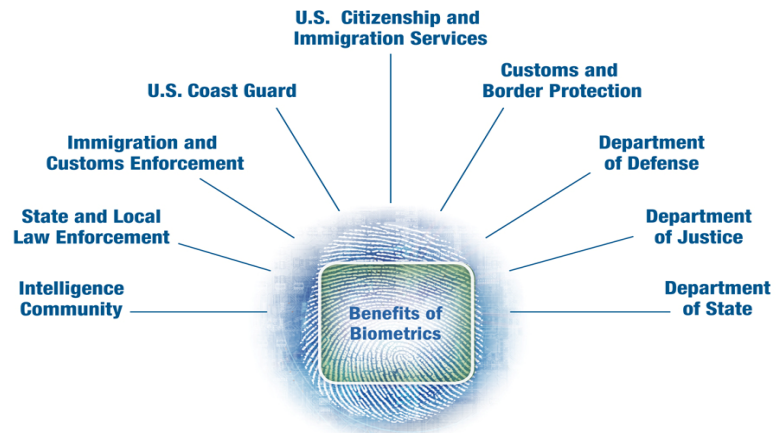
# Fact Sheet

## US-VISIT: AN OVERVIEW

The US-VISIT program was established in March 2003 as one of the initial programs within the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS). US-VISIT was established in order to accurately record the entry and exit of travelers to the United States by collecting biographic and biometric information—digital fingerprints and photographs.

Today, US-VISIT is advancing the security of the United States and worldwide travel through information sharing and biometric solutions for identity management.

As a part of DHS's National Protection and Programs Directorate, US-VISIT's services help decision makers across federal, state and local government agencies identify, mitigate and eliminate security risks. The following are some of the program's services and their benefits.



## US-VISIT: BENEFITS FOR INTERNATIONAL TRAVELERS

The U.S. government utilizes US-VISIT's biometric services to facilitate legitimate travel, protect travelers against identity theft, prevent fraudulent document use and keep our visitors and citizens safe from harm. Through the collection, storage and analysis of biometric information, US-VISIT enables immigration officials to establish, then verify a person's identity with each encounter within the immigration and border management system.

US-VISIT's innovative biometrics-based services enable the U.S. government to:

- Enhance the security of our citizens and visitors
- Facilitate legitimate travel and trade
- Ensure the integrity of our immigration system
- Protect the privacy of our visitors



A traveler may first encounter US-VISIT's biometric services when applying for a visa, as a part of the Department of State's (DOS) BioVisa program. Through the BioVisa program, consular officers collect biometric and biographic data, establishing an applicant's identity and checking their data against watch lists. With this information, the officer determines whether or not the person is eligible for a visa.



Most international visitors, including those who go through the BioVisa program, experience biometric screening when they arrive at a U.S. port of entry. U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officers use US-VISIT's biometric services to quickly and accurately verify whether the person applying for entry is the same person to whom the visa was issued. For those travelers who do not require a visa, a port of entry is the first opportunity to establish a traveler's identity through US-VISIT services.



US-VISIT monitors and records the status of people who apply for immigration benefits in the United States, such as adjustments to lawful permanent resident status, extensions of stay or changes from one nonimmigrant visa category to another. U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (CIS) uses US-VISIT services for travelers, determining their eligibility for requested immigration benefits.

In collaboration with the travel industry, U.S. air carriers and other DHS components, US-VISIT is working to incorporate biometric exit procedures for international travelers into the existing airport or seaport experience. DHS continues to work with industry, local communities and other interested parties to develop the best solution to meet the multiple challenges of the land border environment.

## **US-VISIT: BENEFITS FOR IMMIGRATION BEYOND OUR PORTS OF ENTRY**

US-VISIT biometric identity management services directly benefit the U.S. government's ability to enforce immigration laws by matching entry and exit data to identify visa overstays, supporting mobile biometric collection capabilities and providing information about criminals and immigration violators.

### **U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement: Identifying Visa Overstays**

Prior to the implementation of US-VISIT, international travelers who overstayed their authorized period of admission were only identified as a consequence of some other encounter with law enforcement, such as worksite enforcement operations, an unrelated arrest on criminal charges, or a national security-related action.

US-VISIT matches the entry and exit records of people to identify those who may have overstayed the terms of their admission and provides this information to U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). This enhanced information-sharing process provides an increased capability to identify and apprehend overstays—a critical tool with which to manage the immigration and border system.

## **U.S. Coast Guard: Identifying Illegal Migrants at Sea**

US-VISIT and the U.S. Coast Guard are testing a program to collect biometric information from migrants interdicted while attempting to enter illegally into U.S. territory through the eastern Caribbean Sea, around Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands, known as the San Juan sector.



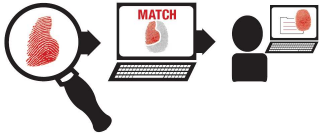
Using a mobile biometric collection device, the Coast Guard is comparing migrants' biometric information against information in the US-VISIT database about criminals and immigration violators who were previously deported, are considered recidivists and are aggravated felons from Caribbean nations.

This represents a significant advance in our continued efforts to deploy mobile biometric collection and analysis capabilities at sea to assist in the apprehension and prosecution of illegal migrants and migrant smugglers.

## **US-VISIT: BENEFITS FOR TERRORISM DETECTION AND PREVENTION**

US-VISIT is facilitating the coordination and sharing of information about criminals and immigration violators to improve the United States' and its global partners' ability to detect potential threats and prevent their travel.

US-VISIT is working across the federal government to promote intelligence efforts in identifying high-risk people. In collaboration with the Department of Defense and the intelligence community, US-VISIT includes biometric information about known or suspected terrorists on its watch list.



US-VISIT biometric services also facilitate the identification of terrorists by matching against latent fingerprints collected from terrorist safe houses and ongoing criminal investigations conducted around the world. DHS's and DOS's move to a 10-fingerprint collection standard will expand this capability by providing additional fingerprints against which to match latent fingerprints.

US-VISIT also works closely with other governments to develop international standards for identity management. By providing technical assistance in support of their efforts to develop biometric identity management programs, the U.S. government furthers the establishment of consistent and compatible processes and standards worldwide.



For example, US-VISIT has been providing assistance to the United Kingdom's Immigration and Nationality Directorate in the effort to establish a U.K. biometric identity management program. In addition, US-VISIT has assisted with criminal fingerprint information sharing among federal and foreign governments.

## **US-VISIT: SAFEGUARDING PRIVACY AND THE ENVIRONMENT**

DHS protects the biometric and biographic information provided by travelers and ensures that their privacy is protected in a manner consistent with all applicable privacy laws and regulations. Personal information is kept secure and confidential, and appropriate security controls ensure that the data is not used or accessed improperly.

US-VISIT publishes Privacy Impact Assessments to ensure that personal information is used appropriately, protected from misuse and improper disclosure and destroyed when no longer needed. This will be updated as necessary.

US-VISIT's dedicated privacy officer is responsible for the program's compliance with privacy laws and procedures, as well as creating a culture within the program where privacy is inherently valued, treated as a fundamental right and obligation and embedded into planning and development processes. Information on the US-VISIT privacy program is available at [www.dhs.gov/us-visit](http://www.dhs.gov/us-visit).

DHS's Traveler Redress Inquiry Program (DHS TRIP) provides a single point of contact for people who have inquiries or seek resolution regarding difficulties they experienced during their travel screening at transportation hubs, such as airports and train stations, or crossing U.S. borders. DHS TRIP is part of the U.S. government's effort to ensure that travelers' records are accurate, their privacy protected and treatment from DHS officials is professional and fair. Information on DHS TRIP is available at [www.dhs.gov/trip](http://www.dhs.gov/trip).

US-VISIT complies with all environmental laws and regulations. Environmental Impact Assessments conducted prior to deployment of every phase of the program have found no adverse impacts.

## **US-VISIT: A CONGRESSIONAL MANDATE**

There are four laws that authorize US-VISIT:

- Enhanced Border Security and Visa Entry Reform Act of 2002
- USA PATRIOT Act of 2001
- Immigration and Naturalization Service Data Management Improvement Act (DMIA) of 2000 (amended and replaced the IIRIRA)
- Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996 (IIRIRA)

## **US-VISIT: FUNDING**

- The US-VISIT program received \$336 million in FY2006 and Congress appropriated \$362 million for FY2007.
- US-VISIT received \$340 million in FY2005 and \$330 million in FY2004.

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