

Department of Homeland Security Announces Biometric Identification System Operational at Border Patrol Stations Nationwide

Release Date: 09/21/04 00:00:00

For Immediate Release
Office of the Press Secretary
Contact: Press Office 202-282-8010
September 21, 2004

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) in a joint effort with the Department of Justice (DOJ) announced today that integrated ten-print biometric identification technology is operating in every U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) Border Patrol station throughout the country.

The newly advanced capability allows CBP Border Patrol agents to simultaneously search the FBI's fingerprint database. The Integrated Automated Fingerprint Identification System (IAFIS) and DHS's Automated Biometric Identification System (IDENT) provides rapid identification of individuals with outstanding criminal warrants through electronic comparison of ten-print digital fingerscans against a vast nationwide database of previously captured fingerprints.

"This capability is a fast effective weapon in the war on terror. It allows law enforcement personnel to thoroughly check immigration and criminal backgrounds of people that have entered the U.S. illegally," said Border and Transportation Security Under Secretary Asa Hutchinson. "Its implementation is absolutely critical to our priority mission to protect our borders, and today we are pleased to announce that deployment was completed ahead of schedule."

The IDENT/IAFIS program began as a pilot in the San Diego Border Patrol Sectors Brown Field Station and the Calexico Port of Entry in August 2001. By the end of 2003, the program had evolved and was installed at 31 Border Patrol Stations and 48 ports of entry. Homeland Security Secretary Tom Ridge committed to deploying IDENT/IAFIS to 70% of CBP Border Patrol Stations by the end of the 2004 calendar year.

This week, the IDENT/IAFIS program is fully operational within all 148 Border Patrol stations and is in the process of being deployed to all the ports of entry nationwide, exceeding DHS's prior commitment by bringing the deployment instead to 100% of Border Patrol stations months ahead of schedule. As part of US-VISIT deployment, all 115 air and sea ports of entry and the busiest 50 land border ports of entry will have this capability by November 15, 2004. In 2005 remaining ports of entry and all Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) field locations will plan for deployment.

As a result of IAFIS technology, CBP Border Patrol agents have arrested: 138 homicide suspects; 67 kidnapping suspects; 226 sexual assault suspects; 431 robbery suspects; 2,342 suspects for assaults of other types; and 4,801 suspected traffickers of dangerous narcotics. The IDENT system which forms the backbone of the US-VISIT program has identified 287 criminals and other inadmissible aliens seeking admission to the U.S.