

# ID CARDS: REISSUING BORDER CROSSING CARDS

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## HEARING

BEFORE THE  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT MANAGEMENT,  
ORGANIZATION, AND PROCUREMENT  
OF THE  
COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT  
AND GOVERNMENT REFORM  
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ONE HUNDRED TENTH CONGRESS

SECOND SESSION

JUNE 25, 2008

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## **ID CARDS: REISSUING BORDER CROSSING CARDS**

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**WEDNESDAY, JUNE 25, 2008**

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT MANAGEMENT,  
ORGANIZATION, AND PROCUREMENT,  
COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM,  
*Washington, DC.*

The subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 2:30 p.m., in room 2154, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Edolphus Towns (chairman of the subcommittee) presiding.

Present: Representatives Towns, Bilbray, Duncan, and Platts.

Staff present: Michael McCarthy, staff director; William Jusino, professional staff member; Kwane Drabo, clerk; John Brosnan, minority senior procurement counsel; Charles Phillips, minority counsel; and Todd Greenwood, minority professional staff member.

Mr. TOWNS. The subcommittee will come to order. Let me begin by first apologizing for our lateness, but we have to vote around here. And, of course, we had some votes going on, and that is what delayed us here.

Welcome to today's oversight hearing on the border crossing cards. Today we are examining an issue critical to the safety of our borders and to national security. Each year, the State Department issues millions of border crossing cards to Mexican nationals living near the U.S. border. These cards are visa documents that allow short-term travel across the border for business and tourism.

Now, visa documents like these allow valuable cultural and economic exchange. We want these documents to be processed and used as the efficiently as possible so that this exchange happens smoothly. As millions of border crossing cards expire between now and 2012, replacing them will put tremendous pressure on our consular office in Mexico. The State Department will have a lot of work to do to minimize the delays in coming years.

Two years ago, the full committee held a hearing on delays in visa processing. In some countries, applicants had to wait more than 5 months to get an interview. We have heard from many people across this land in terms of these delays and how to deal with the damage to cultural and economic exchange.

Last summer, the State Department had a backlog of several months in processing U.S. passport applications, which also hurt tourism and commerce. So, it is with this recent history in mind that we ask: what is being done to make sure this type of backlog does not occur again in Mexico? However, we still have to make certain, make sure we strike the right balance between security

and openness and ensure that these documents are not abused by anyone who wants to harm you.

This hearing will continue the subcommittee's review of identification card programs in the Federal Government. I will let the State Department's witness go into detail about their plan. But I would like to mention one part of it now.

State has contracted with Computer Sciences Corporation for a pilot program to speed up the application process in Mexico. It will do this by moving the data collection step, including the application, and fingerprint collection, to privately run offices, instead of U.S. consulates. I think we should take a hard look at whether this type of outsourcing will maintain security and government control of visa issuance.

I look forward to hearing these concerns addressed today.

We will also hear today about the new security technology that the State Department and the Department of Homeland Security are using in the border crossing card. They have assured us that the new card is much more secure than the version it is replacing, but some critics have said that it is not. I'm glad that we will have an opportunity today to hear more about the new card from security experts.

I would like to thank the ranking member, Congressman Bilbray from California, for his work on this issue. He has been working on it for quite some time. I know it's very important to his community in San Diego. We also agree that the safety of our borders and the openness of our travel policies are important issues. That is why I'm glad we worked together on this hearing today, so we can make sure that we are doing all we can to protect ourselves while also allowing full opportunities for cultural and economic exchange.

I now yield to my colleague from California for his opening statement.

[The prepared statement of Hon. Elophus Towns follows:]

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**SUBCOMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT MANAGEMENT, ORGANIZATION,  
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**OVERSIGHT HEARING**  
**ID Cards: Reissuing Border Crossing Cards**

Wednesday, June 25, 2008  
Room 2154 Rayburn House Office Building

**OPENING STATEMENT**  
**OF CHAIRMAN TOWNS**

Welcome to today's oversight hearing on the Border Crossing Card. Today we are examining an issue critical to the safety of our borders and to national security. Each year, the State Department issues millions of Border Crossing Cards to Mexican nationals living near the U.S. border. These cards are visa documents that allow short-term travel across the border for business and tourism.

Now, visa documents like these allow valuable cultural and economic exchange. We want these documents to be processed and used as efficiently as possible so that this exchange happens smoothly. As millions of Border Crossing Cards expire between now and 2012, replacing them will put tremendous pressure on our consular offices in Mexico. The State Department will have a lot of work to do to minimize delays in the coming years.

Two years ago, the full committee held a hearing on delays in visa processing. In some countries, applicants had to wait more than five months to get an interview. We heard from the world-famous musician, Yo-Yo Ma, that delays like this do real damage to cultural and economic exchange. Last summer, the State Department had a backlog of several months in processing U.S. passport applications, which also hurt tourism and commerce. So it is with this recent history in mind that we ask what is being done to make sure this type of backlog does not occur again in Mexico.

However, we still have to make sure we strike the right balance between security and openness, and ensure that these documents are not abused by anyone who wants to harm us. This hearing will continue the Subcommittee's review of identification card programs in the federal government. I will let the State Department's witness go into details about their plan, but I would like to mention one part of it now. State has contracted with Computer Sciences Corporation for a pilot program to speed up the application process in Mexico. It would do this by moving the data collection step, including the application and fingerprint collection, to privately-run offices instead of U.S. consulates. I think we should take a hard look at whether this type of outsourcing will maintain security and government control of visa issuance. I look forward to hearing these concerns addressed today.

We will also hear today about the new security technology that the State Department and the Department of Homeland Security are using in the Border Crossing Card. They have assured us that the new card is much more secure than the version it is replacing, but some critics have said that it is not. I'm glad that we'll have the opportunity today to hear more about the new card from security experts.



I would like to thank the Ranking Member, Mr. Bilbray, for his work on this issue. I know it is very important to his community in San Diego. We all agree that the safety of our borders and the openness of our travel policies are important issues. That's why I'm glad we worked together on this hearing today, so we can make sure that we are doing all we can to protect ourselves, while also allowing full opportunities for cultural and economic exchange.

Mr. BILBRAY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman, as you referred to, obviously my district and the region of San Diego is very interested in this technology. San Diego-Tijuana happens to be the largest port of entry in the world. Just as we get news reports here about the commute up 95 or down the Baltimore-Washington Parkway, in San Diego you get the report of how long the wait is at the border every morning—people coming in and people going south later in the afternoon. That is just part of our life that border crossing is not just a luxury; it's an essential part of our community.

But, Mr. Chairman, let me just say, I am proud to serve with you as the ranking member, and I want to say this to the people testifying and listening here. This town right now is full of a lot of Democrats looking to get Republicans and Republicans looking to get Democrats. And, the priority of partisanship takes precedence over so many other things. And, I am so proud to serve with the chairman on a subcommittee that truly has abandoned that concept.

You do not see a Democrat or a Republican sitting up here today. You see Americans looking to defend our community and our Nation as Americans. And, I am so proud to be able to be on a committee, that is so rare in today's world in Washington, and that is the ability to serve the Nation first and keep partisanship out of the process as much as possible.

Mr. Chairman, as the 9/11 Commission final report said, for terrorists, travel documents are as important as a weapon. So as we get to testimony today, I want you to know that this ranking member is looking at the fact that our responsibility as a subcommittee is to make sure that just as important as it is to make sure that terrorists don't get weapons of mass destruction, that terrorists don't figure out how to kill our soldiers in Humvees or in vehicles, just as important as making sure terrorists can't get on airplanes to kill another 3,000 Americans, it is just as important that we make sure that we deny terrorists documents, that they can use as weapons against the American people.

And it's not as sexy, and it's not going to be on the front page, and it's not going to be on the evening news, because you don't have the visuals that you have with what is going on overseas. But, this is just as much a part of our national defense and our No. 1 responsibility as a Federal Government as all of those things.

I hope that we can now take the same attitude and same urgency and the same commitment to quality and safety with armoring our borders from terrorist attacks and illegal crossings as we would to armoring our Humvees.

And so, with that, I just want to let the witnesses know ahead of time, you're not facing a separated panel in front of you, of a Democrat and a Republican. You're facing a united committee of Americans, who want to make sure we get to the right answer, as quickly as possible because nothing short of the defense of our neighborhoods are at stake here.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I yield back.

Mr. TOWNS. Thank you very much and let me thank the gentleman for his kind words. Thank you for that as well.

Let us now turn to the panel. It is a longstanding policy of this committee that we swear in all of our witnesses, so if you would be kind enough to stand at this time and raise your right hand.

[Witnesses sworn.]

Mr. TOWNS. You may be seated. Let the record reflect that the witnesses answered in the affirmative.

Let me begin with you, Mr. Tony Edson, the Acting Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of Consular Affairs with the State Department.

He has a great deal of experience with visa issuance.

We want to welcome you here, and we will begin with you and then come down the line. Thank you.

**STATEMENTS OF TONY EDSON, ACTING PRINCIPAL DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR CONSULAR AFFAIRS, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE; COLLEEN M. MANAHER, DIRECTOR, WESTERN HEMISPHERE TRAVEL INITIATIVE, CUSTOMS AND BORDER PROTECTION, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY; AND JESS T. FORD, DIRECTOR, INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS AND TRADE, GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICE**

**STATEMENT OF TONY EDSON**

Mr. EDSON. Chairman Towns, Ranking Member Bilbray and distinguished Members, thank you for the opportunity to discuss what the Department of State is doing to meet the increased workload from the border crossing renewal program in Mission Mexico. The challenging task facing us is clear. Millions of border crossing cards first issued in April 1998 begin expiring this year.

Between 2008 and 2012, more than 5 million border crossing cards will expire. By 2012, the workload in Mexico for visas and border crossing cards resulting from normal demand and the BCC renewal program could exceed 3 million cases. To meet this temporary and cyclical surge demand, we have developed a three-point strategy: to implement new staffing programs, increase infrastructure to accommodate larger numbers of visa interviews, and to leverage technology to gain efficiencies and reinforce integrity in the adjudication process.

To supplement our consular work force in Mexico during the surge period, we have developed a framework for a flexible and temporary work force of consular adjudicators, selected from a highly qualified pools of applicants. This flexible work force will include assigning retired Foreign Service officers for discrete periods of time, in addition to participants of two new programs, professional adjudication specialists and roving adjudication specialists. Both of these new programs will hire qualified adjudicators who have successfully completed all consular officer training and have the language competency and other prerequisites.

We have also developed a facilities strategy that will increase space available for BCC adjudication as well as demands for passport and nationality services affected by the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative rule. Consulate General Monterrey will serve as a consular hub by accommodating overflow demand from our consulates in Matamoros and Nuevo Laredo. To accommodate this in-

crease in Monterrey, the Department is currently expanding interview window capacity from 10 to 26 windows by the end of this year to perform an estimated 700,000 interviews per year.

We will also open a new, large conflict compound in Ciudad Juarez in September 2008 and a new consulate compound in Tijuana, to be completed in 2010 in ample time for the BCC surge there, which according to our projection should peak in 2011.

Innovations in technology enhance our staffing and infrastructure approaches as well as enhance efficiency and security. As you mentioned, we're piloting a new concept of visa processing, offsite data collection, ODC, in Monterrey and Nuevo Laredo whereby a contractor collects the biometric information from the applicants. The consular officer then confirms that biometric information during the interview process.

By moving nongovernmental visa processing functions to an off-site contractor, consular personnel can better focus on critical governmental activities such as the security and integrity of the visa process.

In its July 2007 report, "Security of New Passports and Visas Enhanced, But More Needs to Be Done to Prevent Their Fraudulent Use," the GAO recommended that the Department reassess security features and redesign travel documents on a regular basis. The advent of the BCC renewal program has offered the Department just such an opportunity to redesign the next generation of BCCs.

Later this fall, we will begin replacing the current border crossing card with this new generation and much-improved card design. The Department believes that the physical security of the card itself is paramount. In designing both the passport and border crossing cards, we reviewed a wide range of available security features and consulted with the interagency community and especially with the Department of Homeland Security, Immigration and Customs Enforcement's Forensic Document Lab to make the card as secure and durable as possible. As a result of this collaboration, the card's design includes multiple layers of covert, overt and forensic security features which provide safeguards against tampering and counterfeiting and which also provide easy visual and tactile verification to our colleagues in the Customs and Border Patrol at the ports of entry.

Let me acknowledge the cooperative relationship with the GAO team and their current review of our plans to prepare for the workload demand in Mexico, generated by the BCC renewal program. We have learned a lot of from their study and we appreciate it.

Thank you again, and I welcome your comments.

Mr. TOWNS. Thank you very much for your testimony.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Edson follows:]

**Testimony of Deputy Assistant Secretary for Visas Tony Edson  
Committee on Oversight and Government Reform  
Subcommittee on Government Management,  
Organization, and Procurement  
“ID Cards: Reissuing Border Crossing Cards.”  
Wednesday, June 25<sup>th</sup>, 2008, 2:00 pm  
Room 2247, Rayburn House Office Building**

Chairman Towns, Ranking Member Bilbray and Distinguished Members,

Thank you for this opportunity to discuss what the Department of State is doing to meet the increased workload from the Border Crossing Renewal Program in Mission Mexico. The challenging task facing us is clear: in accordance with Section 104 of the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996, the U.S. Embassy in Mexico City and constituent posts began issuing Border Crossing Cards (BCCs) with machine-readable zones and biometric identifiers to Mexican nationals in April 1998. Since cards issued to adults have a ten-year validity period, these cards began expiring in April 2008.

In fact, between 2008 and 2012, 5,751,315 BCCs will expire and therefore applications for new BCCs will surge. In FY-07, Mission Mexico processed 1.4 million visa and BCC cases. By 2012, the workload for visas and BCCs resulting from normal demand and the BCC renewal demand could approach or exceed 3 million cases, well beyond the ability of our current and planned staffing for these years which could handle up to 1.8 million cases.

Much of the surge demand will be temporary and cyclical to correspond with the 10-year BCC renewal cycle. Therefore, the Department has developed a

three-point strategy to meet the demand: first, implementation of new staffing programs to provide temporary and qualified staffing; second, augmentation of infrastructure to accommodate larger numbers of visa interviews; and finally, technology innovation to gain efficiencies and reinforce integrity in the adjudication process. I will address each of these elements in turn.

### **STAFFING**

In order to supplement the workforce of the officers responsible for adjudicating BCC applications in Mexico during the anticipated BCC surge from 2008 – 2012, the Bureau of Consular Affairs (CA) has begun organizing the framework for a temporary workforce of consular adjudicators selected from highly qualified pools of applicants. This flexible workforce will allow CA to expand its workforce in Mexico to supplement consular officers on the interviewing line as required by workload at any given post in Mexico. In addition to assigning retired Foreign Service Officers for discrete periods of time, CA is implementing two additional programs: the Professional Adjudication Specialist program and the Roving Adjudication Specialist program.

The Professional Adjudication Specialist, or “PAS,” program will hire qualified American citizen Eligible Family Members abroad on Family Member Appointments under the Foreign Service Act to supplement adjudication capacity at posts. The qualifications to become a PAS will include language competency and the successful completion of the full consular officer training course, with which a PAS will receive a designation as a Consular Officer to perform visa and passport adjudications. Resident at post on their spouse’s official orders, PAS

adjudicators are the most cost effective and favored program to supplement adjudicator workforce capacity.

In addition to the PAS program for qualified Eligible Family Members, the Department intends to deploy Roving Adjudication Specialists, or "RAS," to supplement permanent consular officer positions. The RAS program will hire qualified, carefully screened and fully-trained personnel as temporary consular rovers. The Department will deploy these personnel into the Foreign Service as one-year, renewable up to five years, Limited Non-Career Appointments (LNA) to work in Mexico where needed. These RAS employees, recruited from highly qualified pools, such as returning Peace Corps volunteers and participants in the National Security Education Program (NSEPs), will also be Spanish-speaking, fully trained consular officers, assigned to posts in Mexico for short tours. Mission Mexico will send RAS on temporary duty to posts as required in order to maintain low backlogs for consular services.

### **INFRASTRUCTURE**

In order to accommodate the anticipated workload surge in BCC re-issuances, as well as demands for passport and nationality services from American citizens affected by the implementation of the WHTI land rule, the Department has developed a facilities strategy that will increase space available for BCC adjudication, especially visa interview windows, in our existing consulates and embassies to meet the temporary surge. This strategy is being executed within budget and with post-surge operations in mind as well. CA is working to ensure that requirements for the surge maximize existing space and that any new space acquired is appropriate for post-surge operations. To achieve this, CA is requiring

space that is ample for normal demand but that will also accommodate alternate staffing strategies during periods of highest demand.

To ensure that infrastructure and space requirements for the surge are met, CA has identified key regions to service BCC demand. The border regions typically see the most pronounced increases in demand. In the northeast of Mexico, Consulate General Monterrey will serve as a consular hub by accommodating overflow demand (as observed from 1998-2002) from our consulates in Matamoros and Nuevo Laredo. To accommodate this increase in Monterrey, the Department is currently expanding interviewing window capacity from 10 to 26 windows by the end of 2008. Staffed with 1.5 officers per window, Monterrey will be able to perform an estimated 700,000 interviews per year, using the newest technology CA can provide.

In order to accommodate BCC demand in the central border region, the Department will open a large new consulate compound (NCC) in Ciudad Juarez in September of 2008. This new facility, which will be one of the largest of its kind in the world, will accommodate about 100,000 immigrant visas, and up to 400,000 non-immigrant (including BCCs) visas per year. Consulate General Ciudad Juarez will also have significant capacity to accept passport applications and provide additional American citizen services. To the west, a new consulate compound in Tijuana will be completed in 2010, in ample time to handle the BCC surge, which according to projections should peak in 2011 there. The NCC will be able to accommodate all cases anticipated in Tijuana in 2008-2010, including overflow from Nogales.



Although we no longer issue BCCs at the three interior posts (Mexico City, Merida and Guadalajara), some BCC holders will apply there for visas in their passports (visa foils) as their BCCs expire. Demand for BCCs in the interior of Mexico was strong from 1998 to 2002, but generally started later and was not as pronounced as at the border. Mexico City is currently the world's second largest non-immigrant visa post. Demand during the surge is anticipated to move from about 380,000 per year to over 500,000 per year. An ongoing project to increase the number of interview windows from 15 to 23 will accommodate these numbers, especially with the incorporation of new technology and processes.

### **TECHNOLOGY**

Innovations in technology enhance our staffing and infrastructure approaches as well as enhance efficiency and security. CA is piloting a new concept of visa processing, "Offsite Data Collection", or "ODC" in Monterrey and Nuevo Laredo. The pilot currently under evaluation allows visa processing posts to move non-governmental visa processing functions to an off-site contractor.

Currently, a contractor operates Applicant Service Centers (ASC) according to specifications provided by the U.S. Government. In order to allow consular personnel to focus on critical governmental activities such as security and integrity of the visa process, the contractor performs many non-governmental functions, all of which are paid for by the visa applicant. Under ODC, the applicants pay the Machine Readable Visa (MRV) fee to a commercial bank while paying the nominal customer service fee as a separate payment. This customer service fee allows the applicants to call the contractor's call center for visa process information and make an appointment to the ASC. This appointment can be made

for after-hours or even Saturdays, during times the consulate is normally closed. The applicants fill out a visa application on line in our new Consular Electronic Application Center (CEAC) and print out a confirmation form. When the applicants arrive at their ASC appointment the contractor scans their fingers, takes their photo, and arranges for courier services to return documents to the applicant.

The biometric information collected by the contractor is then transmitted electronically to the CEAC form and linked with the applicant's application. This has the advantage of giving consular officers all of the information in the visa application in advance of the interview appointment. All database checks are conducted by relevant U.S.G agencies prior to the applicant's personal appearance before the consular officer.

Upon arriving at the consulate at the appointment time, the applicant moves straight to the interview, bypassing all the waiting in line and other steps that were necessary under the old process. The consular officer verifies the applicant's fingerscans and then conducts the interview. The consular officer has all the information from all databases available to him so that the interview can be targeted to specific issues that may need to be resolved with the application. The consulate has also conducted fraud screening before the applicant even arrives for the interview. This process allows a consular section to make more efficient use of its space and personnel resources for functions that are inherently governmental, such as visa adjudication. This initiative is the key to the successful use of existing facilities without expensive, permanent construction.

Upon completion of the pilot, CA will expand the program to all posts in Mexico and to other high volume posts worldwide. ODC is being piloted as a

contract modification to a pre-existing contract with Computer Sciences Corporation (CSC) to provide telecommunications services to visa applicants in Mexico. This has allowed CA to more quickly and efficiently pilot ODC in preparation for the full and open request for proposal (RFP) later this year for expanded services on a more global basis.

### **BORDER CROSSING CARD**

In its July 2007 report “Security of New Passports and Visas Enhanced, but More Needs to be Done to Prevent their Fraudulent Use,” the GAO recommended that the Department reassess security features and redesign travel documents on a regular basis. The advent of the BCC renewal program has offered the Department just such an opportunity to redesign the next generation of Border Crossing Cards.

Later this fall, the Department will begin to replace the current BCC, produced under a DHS contract, with a new and much-improved card design. The card, modeled on the new passport card, will incorporate an improved design, RFID technology with read capacity consistent with other documents used by State and DHS, state-of-the-art security features and laser engraving. Since the new BCC will be produced from the same card stock as the new passport card, it will incorporate the same overt, covert and forensic security features as the passport card, making it as tamper and counter-resistant proof as possible.

The artwork design will be substantially different so that there can be no confusion between the two cards. The new BCC will have a design reminiscent of the Southwest topography of the U.S., a distinctive color and geometric design, and a differently shaped Optical Variable Device (OVD) or kinegram.

The Department believes the physical security of the card itself is paramount and has included a wide range of security features to ensure the security of the card. In designing the passport and BCC cards, the Department reviewed a wide range of available security features and consulted with the inter-agency community and especially with the Department of Homeland Security's Immigration and Customs Enforcement Forensic Document Lab (FDL) to make the card as secure and durable as possible. As a result of this collaboration, the card's design includes multiple layers of overt, covert, and forensic security features which provide safeguards against tampering and counterfeiting and which also provide easy visual and tactile verification to Customs and Border Protection officers at ports of entry.

The most obvious security feature is laser engraving which is extremely difficult to forge or counterfeit, in place of standard photo dye sublimation images used in standard identity cards. The photograph on the BCC card will be laser engraved into the multiple layers of the card, becoming an integral part of the card material. Contrary to recent media reporting, the laser engraved photograph cannot be removed with a solvent.

Although the BBC is designed to be read by either RFID or by Machine Readable Zone readers, it is also critical that the card be secure on "face value" for inspection. Therefore, to provide easy visual and tactile verification and to enhance the integrity of the card, the Department is using state-of-the-art technology to embed an optical variable device (OVD), or kinegram, inside the card, rather than stamping it on the surface. The embedded OVD overlaps the lasered photograph with the personalized data, and any attempt to alter the OVD

will destroy the integrity of the card. The embedded OVD is easily recognizable on the face of the card by sight and touch, and provides for quick inspection and verification that the card is genuine.

To meet the operational needs of U.S. Customs and Border Protection Officers at land and sea ports-of-entry, the BCC contains a vicinity-read (RFID) chip which serves as a pointer to a stored record in a secure DHS database. There is no personal data to the chip; the chip will only have a number that can be read by authorized CBP readers mounted at traffic lanes at ports of entry. The number will point to the database; personal information of the card holder will be relayed to CBP officers' screens as the card holder approaches the inspection booth. Because the card design does not include any technology that would encode or encrypt bio-data, identity data cannot be tampered with or manipulated, eliminating the possibility that a new or false identity could be associated with the card.

In accordance with current law and consistent with congressional interpretation, the BCC contains a biometric identifier in the form of a digitized photo. Fingerprints collected from the applicants are stored in DHS's IDENT database, but can be confirmed by index finger scans at ports of entry. This represents a shift away from encoding data on cards, which are susceptible to manipulation and degradation. All data linking the card bearer to the card itself is maintained in a secure government database. To provide for those situations where the card cannot be read by RFID or MRZ, the card will contain the same embedded kinegram as the passport card for easy and quick visual and tactile verification by a Customs and Border Protection officer.

The Department wishes to acknowledge the cooperative working relationship with the GAO team in their current review of our plans to prepare for the workload demand in Mexico generated by the BCC renewal program.

Thank you again and I welcome your comments.

Mr. TOWNS. Ms. Manaher.

**STATEMENT OF COLLEEN M. MANAHER**

Ms. MANAHER. Chairman Towns, Ranking Member Bilbray and other distinguished members of the committee, I am pleased to appear before you today to discuss the security of the border crossing card, how it compares with previous versions of the card and how it's integrated with other Federal identification card programs.

The Department of Homeland Security, in partnership with the Department of State, is working to secure our homeland by strengthening our ability to accurately identify all persons, U.S. citizens and visitors alike, before they enter the United States. We're accomplishing this through the implementation of secure document requirements at all ports of entry.

The Department of State has worked very closely with the Department of Homeland Security to develop a secure, highly tamper-resistant passport card that includes vicinity RFID technology and facilitates real-time verification of the document at land border ports.

The newly redesigned, Department of State-issued border crossing card is modeled on the passport card and therefore will have vicinity RFID capability that will contain layers of overt, covert and forensic security features, making it as counterfeit and tamper-resistant as the passport card.

The vicinity RFID capability will provide for the same electronic verification of the document as the passport card, which means verifying the document with the issuing source, which is a significant security enhancement over physical features alone. Our decision to adopt vicinity RFID technology for the land border was based on the need to process legitimate travelers as speedily as possible without impacting security. Vicinity RFID technology affords the most benefits for the facilitated movements of travelers, including the ability to read a travel document in advance at the land border, to verify identity, to pre-position information and, most importantly, to perform watch list queries.

Our research and testing indicates this RFID technology is able to accomplish each of these critical business requirements. Both DHS and CBP have instituted "best practices" for the collection, the protection and the use of personal information for the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative. No personal identifying information is stored on the RFID tag, and all data is stored at remote locations on secure storage devices that only can be accessed via DHS's secure encrypted networks. Implementation of a card-specific tag identifier number will ensure that cloned or duplicated RFID tags can be detected electronically and in real time at the border.

On January 22, 2008, the Department of Homeland Security published a privacy impact assessment for the use of vicinity RFID technology for border crossings. In preparation for the full implementation of the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative, we awarded a contract on January 10, 2008, to begin the process of deploying vicinity RFID facilitative technology and infrastructure to 354 vehicle primary lanes and 35 high volume land ports of entry, which process 95 percent of all land border travelers.

We have started the actual construction in our land border ports, and the installation of the integrated solution will commence shortly. However, until that time, we currently have optical character reader technology in place at air, land and sea ports of entry. This technology reads any travel document with a machine-readable zone, including passports, border crossing cards, trusted traveler cards, permanent resident cards and the new passport card.

All CBP officers are currently trained in the use of this technology and this technology is being used right now. Our trusted traveler programs, NEXUS, SENTRI and FAST, have a total of 462,000 members, and we expect to more than double that number by the end of fiscal year 2009.

This year, trusted traveler cards are being upgraded to make them WHTI-compliant and will include additional security features to make them more tamper-resistant.

These documents will be upgraded with vicinity RFID technology that will allow them to be verified electronically against secure DHS data bases.

In closing, these initiatives discussed today are only a portion of CBP's efforts to secure our homeland, and we will continue to provide our men and women on the front lines with the necessary tools to help them gain effective control of our Nation's borders.

I would like to thank Chairman Towns and Ranking Member Bilbray for the opportunity to present this testimony today and for your continued support of CBP. We will be happy to respond to any questions.

Mr. TOWNS. Thank you very much.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Manaher follows.]



**STATEMENT  
OF**

**COLLEEN MANAHER  
Director, Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative  
Office of Field Operations  
U.S. Customs and Border Protection  
Department of Homeland Security**

**Before The**

**House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform  
Subcommittee on Government Management, Organization, and Procurement**

**Regarding**

**“ID Cards: Reissuing Border Crossing Cards”**

**Washington, DC**

**June 25, 2008**

Chairman Towns, Ranking Member Bilbray, and other distinguished Members of the Committee, I am pleased to appear before you today to discuss the security of the Border Crossing Card (BCC), how it compares with previous versions of the card, and how it is integrated with other federal identification card programs. The Department of Homeland Security (DHS), in partnership with the Department of State (DOS), is working to secure our homeland by strengthening our ability to accurately identify all persons – U.S. citizens and visitors alike – before they enter the United States. We are accomplishing this through the implementation of secure document requirements at all ports of entry in the United States.

In fiscal year 2007 alone, more than 30,000 individuals were apprehended at ports of entry trying to cross the border with false documents. Advanced technology

embedded in these travel documents, with the appropriate privacy protections and infrastructure, will allow DHS the ability to verify an individual's identity and perform real-time queries against lookout databases even before our officers begin questioning.

In preparation for full implementation of the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative (WHTI), DHS awarded a contract on January 10, 2008, to begin the process of deploying vicinity radio frequency identification (RFID) facilitative technology and infrastructure to 354 vehicle primary lanes at 39 high-volume land ports, which process 95 percent of land border traveler crossings. Site surveys to identify construction requirements needed to support RFID technology installation are complete. We have started the actual construction at our land border ports and the installation of the integrated solution will commence shortly. However, until that time, we currently have optical character reader technology in place at air, land, and sea ports of entry. This technology reads any travel document with a machine-readable zone (MRZ), including passports, border crossing cards, trusted traveler cards, permanent resident cards and the new passport card. All CBP officers are currently trained in the use of this technology and this technology is being used right now.

U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) deployed the new vehicle primary client software application to the ports of Blaine, Washington; Detroit, Michigan; Calexico and Andrade, California; Buffalo, New York; and Nogales and San Luis, Arizona, in anticipation of implementing the vicinity RFID primary lane solution. This critical software deployment quickly and effectively provides officers with vital information on border crossers. The training and tools necessary for the successful transition from the current antiquated, text-based system, to a modern, graphical user interface was successfully delivered to more than 1,600 CBP officers to date.

Deployment will continue to most land border locations, with completion scheduled for fall 2008.

Our decision to adopt vicinity RFID technology for the land border was based on the need to process legitimate travelers as speedily as possible without impacting security. After extensive review of available and even possible technologies, DHS selected vicinity RFID as the best technology for our land border management system – and the standard to which all future land border travel documents will comply. Vicinity RFID technology affords the most benefits for the facilitated movement of travelers. Facilitation requires the ability to read a travel document in advance, verify identity, pre-position information, and, most importantly, perform automated watch list queries without impeding the flow of traffic. Our research and testing indicates that RFID technology is able to accomplish each of these requirements.

A traveler is easily verifiable if a passport or other acceptable document with an MRZ or appropriate RFID technology that can be queried automatically is presented. Processing times are considerably longer for a vehicle with passengers presenting documents that cannot be verified by the inspecting officer using such facilitative technology. Often, a CBP officer will need to manually enter an individual's identifying information into the computer if the documentation presented does not have an MRZ. The additional time it takes to process these individuals contributes to delays.

DOS has worked very closely with DHS to develop a secure, highly tamper resistant passport card that includes vicinity RFID technology and facilitates real time verification of the document at land border ports. The newly redesigned DOS-issued BCC is modeled on the passport card and therefore will have vicinity RFID capability

and will contain multiple layers of overt, covert and forensic security features, making it as counterfeit and tamper resistant as the passport card. The vicinity RFID capability will provide for the same electronic verification of the document as the passport card – which means verifying the document with the issuing source – which is a significant security enhancement over data written or encoded on the card itself.

DHS and CBP have instituted best practices for the collection, protection, and use of personal information for WHTI. No personal identifying information is stored on the RFID tag and all data is stored at remote locations on secure storage devices that can only be accessed via DHS's secure, encrypted networks. Implementation of a card specific tag identifier number will ensure that cloned or duplicated RFID tags can be detected electronically and in real time at the border. On January 22, 2008, DHS published a Privacy Impact Assessment for the use of vicinity RFID technology for border crossings.

Time and motion studies are in progress at the busiest land border ports. These studies examine all aspects of vehicle primary processing and time for each individual inspection activity. A series of computer models were developed to look at cause and effect of the introduction of RFID-enabled documents and their increased use. At every port for which a model was developed, the introduction of RFID-enabled documents significantly reduced primary processing time. For example, at San Ysidro, California, use of an RFID-enabled document reduces vehicle primary processing time by an average of 27 percent. At the Bridge of the Americas in El Paso, Texas, the reduction is an average of 32 percent per vehicle. Both of these estimates are based on actual observations and computer modeling. Although we expect to quickly process the documents of most travelers, we will not focus on speed as the singular measure of

success. Speeding up the document querying and authentication process gives more time for our CBP officers to ask questions and conduct inspections of those who require additional scrutiny. Time now spent examining a document will, instead, be used to probe those seeking to enter the United States who may present a higher risk.

Our trusted traveler programs, NEXUS, Secure Electronic Network for Travelers Rapid Inspection (SENTRI), and Free and Secure Trade (FAST), have a total of 462,000 members and we expect to more than double the number of participants by the end of fiscal year 2009. For frequent crossers, the ability to use dedicated NEXUS or SENTRI lanes at the border for expedited processing is a very clear benefit sought by the traveling public—the processing time for border crossers presenting trusted traveler cards is often less than half that for other travelers. This year, trusted traveler cards are being upgraded to make them WHTI-compliant and will include additional security features to make them more tamper-resistant. We are phasing in replacement of the cards; all SENTRI cards will be replaced by the fall, at which time replacement of NEXUS cards will begin. These documents will include upgraded vicinity RFID technology that will allow them to be verified electronically against secure DHS databases.

#### Conclusion

These initiatives discussed today are only a portion of CBP's efforts to secure our homeland, and we will continue to provide our men and women on the front lines with the necessary tools to help them gain effective control of our Nation's borders. I would like to thank Chairman Towns, Ranking Member Bilbray and the Members of the

Committee, for the opportunity to present this testimony today, and for your continued support of DHS and CBP. We will be happy to respond to any questions.

Mr. TOWNS. Mr. Ford.

**STATEMENT OF JESS T. FORD**

Mr. FORD. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, members of the subcommittee. I am pleased to be here today to discuss GAO's ongoing work being conducted for this subcommittee on the Department of State's efforts to prepare for the upcoming surge in its consular workload in Mexico. We plan to issue our final report on this later, at the end of July.

The U.S. Mission in Mexico is the State Department's largest consular operation in the world. In fiscal year 2007, it processed about 1.5 million nonimmigrant visas, which is about 20 percent of the global total. Moreover, its post in Juarez is the largest issuer of U.S. immigrant visas in the world.

The U.S. Mission in Mexico also provides services, including passport processing and emergency assistance, to around 20,000 American citizens living in Mexico. This already-significant consular workload is expected to increase dramatically in the coming years as millions of nonimmigrant visa border crossing cards issued in Mexico between fiscal years 1998 and 2002 will expire and need to be renewed.

In addition, the implementation of the new travel requirements under the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative will, for the first time, require U.S. citizens to carry passports or other approved documentations when traveling between the United States and Mexico.

The State Department must expand its consular capacity in Mexico to keep pace with this expected surge in demand. If State does not take the steps necessary to adequately meet this growth in workload, travel between the two countries could be significantly affected, resulting in inconveniences and hardships for individual travelers and negative consequences for the economies in both countries.

Today, I will discuss two main observations in our upcoming report. First, I'm going to discuss State Department's estimates for its workload in the consulates in Mexico through the year 2012; and second, I'm going to discuss the actions that the Department of State is taking to address this increase in demand.

State anticipates that the Mission in Mexico will, through its passport—excuse me, its NIV and passport workload will double from fiscal year 2007 to 2011, which will be the peak year of demand.

The Mission in Mexico will experience a substantial growth in NIV workload primarily due to the need to renew all of the border crossing cards that are expected to expire. According to State Department forecasts, the Mission in Mexico—the demand will more than double by the year 2011 to approximately 3 million applications. NIV demand will then begin to decline in fiscal year 2012.

The State Department acknowledges that it is uncertain about how many actual cardholders will renew their cards and what the number of first-time NIV applicants will be. However, State officials believe that the forecasts are more likely to overestimate demand. For purposes of planning, the Department is using a worst-

case scenario in determining how many people it will need to hire and how many windows it will have to build.

In addition to the increase in NIV workload, the Mission in Mexico will also face increases in passport workload due to the implementation of the WHTI. The magnitude of the increase in passport workload is more difficult to forecast because, unlike NIVs, there is no historical precedent. Also there is a great deal of uncertainty as to how many U.S. citizens actually live in Mexico or the number of citizens that are likely to apply for a passport.

Despite these challenges in developing forecasts, the State Department has created some initial estimates of workload increases caused by these increases in demand. In anticipation of this demand, the State Department is taking several steps to ensure that the consulates in Mexico keep pace with the projected workload. The State Department is planning to add several new interviewing windows at many of its posts, and it also plans to hire as many as 100 temporary adjudicating officers to handle the workload that is expected from the demand.

Consular officials we met with at many of the consulates in Mexico generally agree that their plan, if fully implemented, should address any increases in workload demand and not result in backlogs. However, the State Department is continuing to revise its estimates on future workload, and we plan in our final report to have the most current information available on that demand.

The State Department's plan to hire temporary adjudicators will almost double the number of officers currently in Mexico during the surge. We identified some posts that may have some difficulties in meeting demand because of the space that is available from the windows. The State Department has a plan to address this problem by having applicants move to another post, where they have expanded the window capacity, and hopefully, there won't be any backlogs in those posts.

Finally, the State Department has begun a pilot program that outsources a portion of the NIV application process that does not require the direct involvement of consular officers, including biometric data collection at offsite facilities. The pilot began in the spring of this year in Nuevo Laredo and in Monterrey. Because it is new, we have not been able to assess the potential impact of this pilot on productivity, fraud and security.

We note that at this point the State Department has not developed milestones for completion of the pilot nor metrics to measure the effectiveness of the pilot.

However, in conclusion, we believe the State Department has done a good job of estimating what the potential demand is likely to be, and that they have a plan in place that should, if fully implemented, address the potential for backlogs in the future.

This concludes my oral statement. I would be happy to answer any questions.

Mr. TOWNS. Thank you very much, Mr. Ford.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Ford follows:]



United States Government Accountability Office

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**GAO**

Testimony

Before the Subcommittee on Government  
Management, Organization and Procurement,  
Committee on Oversight and Government  
Reform, House of Representatives

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For Release on Delivery  
Expected at 2:00 p.m. EDT  
Wednesday, June 25, 2008

## **BORDER SECURITY**

### **State Department Expects to Meet Projected Surge in Demand for Visas and Passports in Mexico**

Statement of Jess T. Ford, Director  
International Affairs and Trade



June 25, 2008

**BORDER SECURITY**

**State Department Expects to Meet Projected Surge in Demand for Visas and Passports in Mexico**



Highlights of GAO-08-931T, a testimony before the Subcommittee on Government Management, Organization, and Procurement, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, House of Representatives

**Why GAO Did This Study**

The U.S. Mission in Mexico is the Department of State's largest consular operation. In fiscal year 2007, it processed 1.5 million of the 5 million nonimmigrant visas (NIV) State handled worldwide. The U.S. Mission in Mexico also provided services, including passport processing and emergency assistance, to 20,000 American citizens in fiscal year 2007. This already significant consular workload is expected to increase dramatically in the coming years as millions of NIV Border Crossing Cards issued in Mexico between fiscal years 1998 and 2002 expire and need to be renewed. In addition, the implementation of new travel requirements under the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative (WHTI) will, for the first time, require U.S. citizens to carry passports, or other approved documentation, when traveling between the United States and Mexico.

This testimony addresses (1) State's estimates of the workload for consulates in Mexico through 2012 resulting from, in particular, new travel requirements and the reissue of Border Crossing Cards; and (2) the actions State has taken to ensure consulates in Mexico keep pace with projected workload increases through 2012. This testimony is based on work currently in process that involves analyzing State's workload forecasts and forecast methodology, interviewing State officials, and visiting five posts in Mexico. GAO discussed this testimony with State officials, who agreed with GAO's findings.

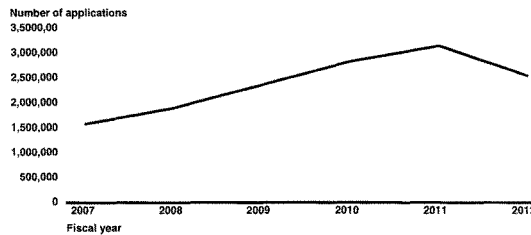
To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on GAO-08-931T. For more information, contact Jess T. Ford at (202) 512-4268 or fordj@gao.gov.

**What GAO Found**

According to State forecasts, as of April 2008, the U.S. Mission in Mexico's (Mission Mexico) NIV demand will peak at slightly over 3 million applications in fiscal year 2011, about twice the number from fiscal year 2007. State acknowledges there are uncertainties regarding the number of Border Crossing Card holders who will renew their cards and the number of first time NIV applicants, which may affect the accuracy of its forecasts. State will be revising the forecasts on a periodic basis as new data become available. In addition to its increase in NIV workload, Mission Mexico will also be facing increases in its passport workload due to the implementation of WHTI. The exact magnitude of the increase in passport workload is more difficult to forecast than for NIVs, because there is not the same historical precedent. There is also a great deal of uncertainty as to how many U.S. citizens actually live in Mexico or the number of these citizens likely to apply for a passport.

In anticipation of this surge in demand for NIVs and U.S. passports, State is taking steps to ensure consulates in Mexico keep pace, including adding consular interview windows to several high-demand posts and planning to hire about 100 temporary adjudicating officers. Consular officials GAO met with at several posts in Mexico generally agreed that these efforts to expand resources should be adequate for Mission Mexico to keep pace with expected workload increases, and GAO's analysis indicates the mission will generally have enough interviewing windows during the surge. Several posts will rely on the addition of temporary adjudicators to keep pace with increased NIV demand and would face backlogs if these slots cannot be filled or if the temporary staff are not as productive as expected. However, State is confident that it has an adequate pool of potential applicants. Mission Mexico may also gain additional capacity from a pilot program, currently under way at two posts, that outsources a portion of the NIV application process to off-site facilities; however, the pilot was implemented too recently to assess its potential impact on productivity, fraud, or security.

**Mission Mexico NIV Demand Forecast**



Source: GAO analysis of State data

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June 25, 2008

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee:

I am pleased to be here to discuss GAO's work on the Department of State's (State) efforts to prepare for the upcoming surge in its consular workload in Mexico.

Legitimate travel between Mexico and the United States contributes to bilateral trade of over \$1 billion per day, according to State. The U.S. Mission in Mexico (Mission Mexico) is State's largest consular operation in the world; in fiscal year 2007, it processed 1.5 million of the 8 million nonimmigrant visas (NIV) State handled worldwide. Moreover, its post in Ciudad Juarez was the largest issuer of U.S. immigrant visas in the world. The U.S. Mission in Mexico also provided services, including passport processing and emergency assistance, to around 20,000 American citizens in fiscal year 2007. This already significant consular workload is expected to increase dramatically in the coming years as millions of NIV Border Crossing Cards issued in Mexico between fiscal years 1998 and 2002 expire and need to be renewed. In addition, the implementation of new travel requirements under the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative (WHTI) will, for the first time, require U.S. citizens to carry passports, or other approved documentation, when traveling between the United States and Mexico. State must expand its consular capacity in Mexico to keep pace with this expected surge in demand for millions of visas and thousands of U.S. passports over the next several years. If State does not take the steps necessary to adequately meet this growth in workload, travel between the two countries could be significantly affected, resulting in inconveniences and hardships for individual travelers and negative consequences for the economies of both countries.

Today, I will discuss (1) State's estimates of the workload for consulates in Mexico through 2012 resulting from, in particular, new travel requirements and the reissue of Border Crossing Cards; and (2) the actions State has taken to ensure that consulates in Mexico keep pace with projected workload increases through 2012.

My statement today is based upon GAO's ongoing work, scheduled to be completed at the end of July 2008, on State's efforts to prepare for the upcoming surge in its consular workload in Mexico. In our work to date,

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we analyzed data provided by State on current and forecasted passport and nonimmigrant visa workload for all 10 posts in Mexico.<sup>1</sup> We analyzed the reliability of State passport and NIV workload data and found them suitably reliable for our purposes. As part of our review of the data, we also assessed State's forecasting methodologies based upon available information. We also analyzed State's estimates of the staffing and facility resources needed to meet the anticipated workload increases in Mexico. In addition, we performed work at five consulates in Mexico—Mexico City, Guadalajara, Monterrey, Ciudad Juarez, and Tijuana—observing visa and passport processing at each post and meeting with consular management and representatives from the Nonimmigrant Visa and American Citizen Services units. We also conducted a series of interviews with State officials in Washington, D.C. Lastly, we reviewed a range of State and Mission Mexico documentation, including Mission Performance Plans, consular packages, rightsizing reports, policy guidance documents, and various cables and memos.

We conducted this performance audit from November 2007 to June 2008 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

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## Summary

State anticipates that Mission Mexico's NIV and passport workload will likely double from fiscal year 2007 to 2011, with NIV applications continuing to constitute the vast majority of the mission's workload. Mission Mexico will experience a substantial growth in its NIV workload primarily due to the need to renew millions of Border Crossing Cards that are set to expire beginning in fiscal year 2008. According to State forecasts from April 2008, Mission Mexico's NIV demand will peak at slightly over 3 million applications in fiscal year 2011, a 103 percent increase from fiscal year 2007. NIV demand will then begin to decline in fiscal year 2012. On June 18, State informed us that it has produced revised forecasts based upon a newly developed methodology; however, we have not had time to

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<sup>1</sup>In addition to the consular section in the U.S. embassy in Mexico City, Mission Mexico has consulates in nine cities—Ciudad Juarez, Guadalajara, Hermosillo, Matamoros, Merida, Monterrey, Nogales, Nuevo Laredo, and Tijuana.

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assess these forecasts or include them in the testimony. State acknowledges it is uncertain about how many Border Crossing Card holders will renew their cards and the number of first time NIV applicants and that various methodological factors associated with their April 2008 projections may also affect the accuracy of its forecasts. However, State officials believe the forecasts are more likely to overestimate demand. For example, to be conservative, State assumes in its projections that all Border Crossing Card holders will renew their cards upon expiration, even though a number of card holders are unlikely to renew their cards because they have either legally or illegally immigrated to the United States. Consequently, State intends to use these forecasts as a rough guide in developing plans to meet the upcoming surge in NIV workload. In addition to the increase in NIV workload, Mission Mexico will be facing increases in its passport workload due to the implementation of WHTI. The magnitude of the increase in passport workload is more difficult to forecast because, unlike with the NIV surge, there is no historical precedent. Also, there is a great deal of uncertainty as to how many U.S. citizens actually live in Mexico, or the number of these citizens likely to apply for a passport. Despite the challenges developing passport forecasts, State has created some initial estimates of workload increases caused by the implementation of WHTI; the estimates show passport and Consular Reports of Birth Abroad (CRBA) workload peaking at 73,000 applications in fiscal year 2009—the year in which WHTI requires a passport for travel to the United States by land<sup>2</sup>—and fiscal year 2010, then declining.<sup>3</sup>

In anticipation of the surge in demand for NIVs and U.S. passports in Mexico, State is taking several steps to ensure that consulates in Mexico keep pace with projected workload increases through 2012, including adding interviewing windows to several posts; it also plans to hire about 100 temporary adjudicating officers with renewable 1-year contracts. Consular officials we met with at several high-demand posts in Mexico generally agreed that State's plans, if fully implemented, to expand resources and implement new procedures should be adequate for Mission Mexico to keep pace with expected workload increases. However, as State continues to revise its estimates of future workload, it may need to adjust

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<sup>2</sup>WHTI will be implemented June 1, 2009, so long as State and the Department of Homeland Security have certified 3 months in advance that several criteria have been met. Pub. L. No. 110-161, Div. E, Title V, §545 (Dec. 26, 2007).

<sup>3</sup>State tracks passport and CRBA applications together because both types of applications are handled by consular officers in posts' American Citizen Services units.

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its resource plans to reflect the latest assumptions about future demand for passports and NIVs. Our analysis of NIV interview window capacity indicates that Mission Mexico should generally have enough windows at the peak of NIV demand projected for fiscal year 2011. State's plans to hire temporary adjudicators would almost double the existing number of consular officers throughout Mission Mexico during the surge and allow posts to reduce staff levels when the surge is over. Monterrey, Mexico City, Ciudad Juarez, and Tijuana are expected to be the heaviest users of temporary adjudicators and would therefore be at greatest risk of increased NIV backlogs if temporary adjudicator slots cannot be filled. However, State officials are confident they have an adequate pool from which to hire qualified people to fill these slots in time to meet peak demand in Mexico. State also began a pilot program that outsources a portion of the NIV application process that does not require the direct involvement of consular officers, including biometric data collection, at off-site facilities. The pilot began in the spring of 2008 in Nuevo Laredo and Monterrey. Because it is ongoing, we are unable to assess its potential impact on productivity, fraud, or security. Additional efficiencies may be gained at posts in Mexico from State's recent guidance authorizing consular officers to waive interviews of certain NIV renewal applicants.<sup>4</sup> In addition, while posts acknowledged that predicting demand in Mexico for U.S. passports resulting from WHTI is difficult, they believe they have enough flexibility to shift resources from NIV sections as needed to avoid significant backlogs in processing passport applications.

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## Background

Foreign nationals who wish to visit the United States, including business travelers and tourists, must generally obtain a nonimmigrant visa. The majority of travelers visiting the United States from Mexico receive an NIV Border Crossing Card, which is valid for 10 years. In order to obtain a Border Crossing Card, applicants must generally: (1) schedule an appointment for a visa interview at a U.S. consulate, (2) fill out an application and pay applicable fees, (3) have their photos taken and fingerprints collected at a U.S. consulate, (4) have their information checked in the Consular Lookout and Support System—State's name-

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<sup>4</sup>Current law and State regulations allow for the waiver of the NIV interview in limited circumstances, including when an applicant is applying for a renewal and (1) it is within 12 months of the expiration of the previous biometric visa, (2) it is for the same classification of visa, (3) the applicant is applying at the consular post of his or her usual residence, and (4) the Foreign Service Officer adjudicating the case has no indication of visa ineligibility or of noncompliance with U.S. immigration laws and regulations.

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check database that consulates use to access critical information for visa adjudication, and (5) have an interview with a consular officer, who is responsible for making the adjudication decision.

In 1996, Congress passed the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA), which required that every Border Crossing Card issued after April 1, 1998, contain a biometric identifier, such as a fingerprint, and be machine readable. The law also mandated that all Border Crossing Cards issued before April 1, 1998, would expire on October 1, 1999, regardless of when their validity period ended. This deadline was extended by Congress two times, first to September 30, 2001, and then to September 30, 2002. The passage of IIRIRA created a significant surge in Mission Mexico's NIV workload, as Border Crossing Card holders sought to obtain the new visas before the congressionally mandated expiration date. This culminated in a historic high in NIV workload in fiscal year 2001, when the mission processed 2,869,000 NIV applications.

We have previously reported on challenges State faced in managing its NIV workload.<sup>5</sup> Among other things, we found that NIV applicants have often had to wait for extended periods of time to receive appointments for interviews. Believing that wait times for NIV interviews were excessive, in February 2007, State announced a worldwide goal of interviewing NIV applicants within 30 days. In the year before the 30-day goal was announced, the average wait time across the consulates in Mexico had been as high as 73 days; by the time of the announcement of the 30-day goal, however, Mission Mexico had already successfully reduced the average wait time to less than 30 days at all but one of its posts. Since February 2007, the mission has successfully kept the average wait time among the consulates at less than 30 days.<sup>6</sup>

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#### The Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative

In response to recommendations in the 9/11 Commission report, the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004, as amended,

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<sup>5</sup>See GAO, *Border Security: Long-Term Strategy Needed to Keep Pace with Increasing Demand for Visas*, GAO-07-847 (Washington, D.C.: July 13, 2007); and *Border Security: Reassessment of Consular Resource Requirements Could Help Address Visa Delays*, GAO-06-542T (Washington, D.C.: Apr. 4, 2006).

<sup>6</sup>Over this period, Monterrey is the only post in Mexico where wait times averaged over 30 days in more than 1 month.

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required that the Secretary of Homeland Security, in conjunction with the Secretary of State, develop and implement a plan that requires United States citizens to provide a passport, other document, or combination of documents that the Secretary of Homeland Security deems sufficient to show identity and citizenship when entering the United States from certain countries, including Mexico. This will represent a significant change for many U.S. citizens living in Mexico, who have until recently been able to routinely cross between the United States and Mexico with more limited documentation. The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and State are implementing these requirements through WHTI. DHS implemented WHTI at all air ports of entry into the United States on January 23, 2007, and plans to implement the requirements at land and sea ports of entry beginning in June 2009, assuming that DHS and State can certify 3 months in advance that certain criteria have been met, as required under the law.<sup>7</sup>

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### State Anticipates Significant Increases in Mission Mexico's Nonimmigrant Visa and Passport Workload from Fiscal Years 2007 to 2011

Ten years after the first surge in demand for Border Crossing Cards began in fiscal year 1998, State anticipates another surge in NIV demand in Mexico as these cards begin to expire and millions of card holders apply for renewals at U.S. consulates. In addition to this cyclical surge in demand caused by the expiring Border Crossing Cards, State officials anticipate that Mission Mexico will continue to experience steady growth in demand from first-time visa applicants. To assist in preparing for these increases, State has developed forecasts of the expected future NIV workload in Mexico.<sup>8</sup> The NIV projections and forecasting methodology discussed in this report are based upon data State provided to us in February and April 2008. On June 18, State informed us that it has developed revised NIV forecasts for Mission Mexico based upon an alternative methodology. We have not yet had time to analyze these NIV forecasts or incorporate them into this testimony, but we may include a

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<sup>7</sup>According to the April 2008 final rule on WHTI implementation at sea and land ports of entry, DHS and State believe that these certifications will be made well in advance of the June 1, 2009, deadline for implementation. In the event that DHS and State are unable to complete all of the necessary certifications 3 months before June 1, 2009, the final rule states that they will provide notice to the public and amend the date(s) for compliance with the document requirements. See: *Documents Required for Travelers Departing From or Arriving in the United States at Sea and Land Ports-of-Entry From Within the Western Hemisphere*, Final Rule, 73 *Fed. Reg.* 18,384, 18,386 (Apr. 3, 2008).

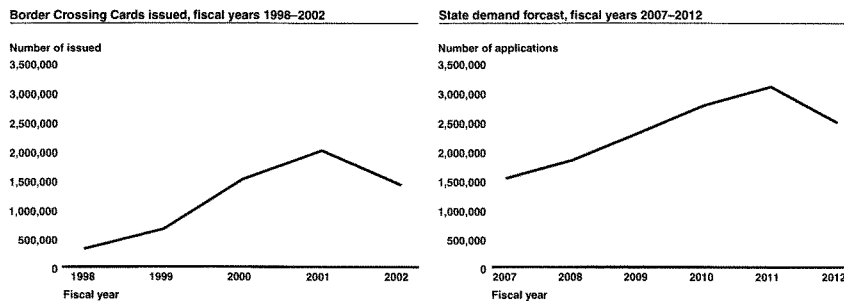
<sup>8</sup>State's NIV demand forecasts include Border Crossing Cards, as well as other types of nonimmigrant visas.



discussion of them in our final report, which is scheduled to be completed at the end of July 2008.

State's forecasts, as of April 2008, anticipate that the upcoming surge in NIV demand will follow a pattern similar to the previous Border Crossing Card surge from fiscal years 1998 to 2002, as shown in figure 1. According to the forecasts, the surge will begin in fiscal year 2008, with missionwide NIV demand peaking at a little more than 3 million applications in fiscal year 2011—a 103 percent increase in demand from fiscal year 2007. The forecasts show the surge beginning to abate in fiscal year 2012.

**Figure 1: Comparison of Demand Forecast for Mission Mexico to Border Crossing Cards Issued in Fiscal Years 1998 to 2002**



Source: GAO analysis of State data.

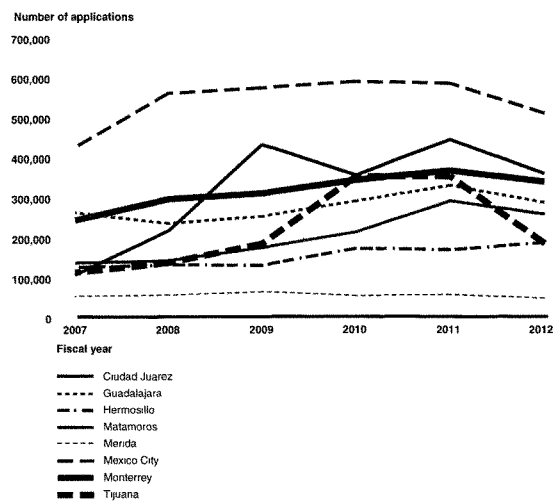
Note: State's NIV demand forecasts include Border Crossing Cards, as well as other types of nonimmigrant visas. This forecast is as of April 2008.

In addition to the missionwide forecast, State has developed demand forecasts for individual consulates. As shown in figure 2, State's forecasts anticipate that Mexico City will have the highest levels of demand, with applications growing to over 580,000 in fiscal year 2010. While Mexico City is projected to have the highest overall demand, State anticipates that the steepest increases in demand will occur at border posts.<sup>9</sup> This follows a

<sup>9</sup>There are five border posts in Mexico: Tijuana, Nogales, Ciudad Juarez, Nuevo Laredo, and Matamoros.

pattern similar to the previous Border Crossing Card surge, where the border consulates assumed a greater share of the total mission workload during the surge, with this share then diminishing again at the surge's end.

**Figure 2: Mexico Posts' NIV Demand Forecasts, Fiscal Years 2007 - 2012**



Source: GAO analysis of State data.

Note: This forecast is from April 2008 when State's methodology for generating demand forecasts relied upon workload data from fiscal years 1997 and 1998. State was unable to generate its own demand forecasts for the border posts of Nogales and Nuevo Laredo because Nogales was not open and Nuevo Laredo was not issuing visas at the time.

Estimating future NIV demand is inherently uncertain, and State acknowledges that several factors could affect the accuracy of its April 2008 NIV demand forecasts. First, the forecasts are based heavily upon Change Navigators' 2005 *Consular Affairs Futures Study* (CAFS), which

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generated NIV demand forecasts for various high-volume and high-growth missions around the globe, including Mexico.<sup>10</sup> Thus, the extent to which the underlying CAFS numbers prove to be accurate affects State's revised forecasts. While the CAFS includes a general analysis of how various demographic, economic, and political factors impact NIV demand across countries, it does not explain how it arrived at its specific forecasts for Mexico. Based upon our review of the forecasts, it appears that the CAFS authors relied primarily upon historical workload data from the previous Border Crossing Card surge, but we could not assess how, if at all, other considerations were factored into the forecasts. Second, methodological issues associated with State's April 2008 NIV forecasts may affect their accuracy in projecting demand. For example, State relied heavily on actual demand data from fiscal year 2007 to revise the CAFS forecasts, in order to try to better account for growth in demand from first-time visa applicants. In doing so, State assumed demand for fiscal year 2007 was representative of the underlying long-term growth in NIV demand. However, this is not necessarily the case, as State officials acknowledge demand may have been artificially high in fiscal year 2007 as posts worked off backlogs that had accumulated from previous years. State officials also noted that they chose to be conservative and assume all Border Crossing Card holders would renew their cards when they expire. However, this is not likely to happen, as a portion of Border Crossing Card holders have had their cards lost or stolen and already had them replaced, while others have either legally or illegally immigrated to the United States and will not be returning to renew their cards. Consequently, the forecasts could prove to be higher than actual demand depending on the share of Border Crossing Card holders who do not seek a renewal at the expiration of their card.

State's approach to forecasting NIV workload, based on historical precedent and underlying growth in demand, and other factors, provide a reasonable basis for addressing the anticipated surge in NIV demand. State has detailed data on the number of Border Crossing Cards issued during the previous surge and when they are expiring, which gives it a strong basis for its projections. Further, even if the NIV forecasts do not prove completely accurate, State officials do not expect significant risks for several reasons. First, State officials believe that the forecasts are

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<sup>10</sup>State commissioned Change Navigators, a consultancy specializing in business management and organization development, to examine the various factors that impact growth in NIV demand, to identify those countries likely to experience the most rapid growth in NIV demand, and to generate NIV demand forecasts for these countries. Mexico was among those countries included in the study.

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conservative, with NIV demand likely to be lower than forecasted. Second, State intends to avoid relying on the exact numbers in the forecasts and is instead using them as a rough guide in developing plans to meet the upcoming surge in NIV workload. Third, State officials believe they have developed these plans with sufficient flexibility to be able to respond as needed if actual workload deviates from the forecasts. Finally, State plans to continually track demand at the consulates as the NIV surge unfolds and will revise these forecasts periodically.

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#### Passport Workload

In addition to the surge in NIV workload, Mission Mexico will also experience a surge in its passport workload as a result of the implementation of WHTI at air ports of entry in January 2007 and its subsequent, intended implementation at land ports in June 2009. According to State officials, the mission has already seen a significant increase in its passport workload as U.S. citizens living in Mexico have begun to apply for passports in response to the new documentary requirements. Mission Mexico's passport and CRBA workload, which State tracks together because both types of applications are handled by consular officers in posts' American Citizen Services units, grew to 34,496 applications in fiscal year 2007, a 77 percent increase from fiscal year 2006. Despite the expected increases, passport workload will continue to be only a fraction of Mission Mexico's workload, relative to NIV applications.

While State expects passport workload in Mexico to continue to increase significantly in the coming years, it is difficult to predict precisely what the magnitude of this increase will be. Unlike with the NIV surge, there is not a clear historical precedent to the WHTI surge. Additionally, there is a great deal of uncertainty regarding the number of U.S. citizens living in Mexico and the number of these citizens who are potential passport applicants. Therefore, efforts to forecast increases in passport workload due to WHTI are extremely challenging. Nonetheless, State has developed rough estimates of Mission Mexico's passport and CRBA workload with the implementation of WHTI. These estimates are based on the input of experienced consular officers because the lack of data on U.S. citizens living in Mexico made any type of statistical analysis problematic. Based upon State's estimates, Mission Mexico's WHTI workload is projected to peak at 73,000 passport and CRBA applications in fiscal year 2009 with the implementation of WHTI at land ports of entry. State anticipates that passport and CRBA workload will continue at that peak rate in fiscal year 2010 and then begin to decline. In its estimates, State predicts that from fiscal years 2007 to 2009, workload will increase by around 177 percent for Mission Mexico.

To this point, State has not revised its WHTI estimates based on workload in fiscal year 2007, or year to date in the current fiscal year, even though the workload estimates were low in fiscal year 2007. State says it has not needed to revise its estimates at this point, because posts have been able to keep up with workload increases without the need for additional resources. In addition, rather than focusing on developing precise workload estimates in order to prepare for the surge, State has instead chosen to pursue strategies designed to provide it with the flexibility to respond to increases in workload as they occur—particularly as a more limited number of resources will be needed to cover increases in passport and CRBA applications than NIV applications, given their small share of Mission Mexico's overall consular workload.

### State Is Adding Interviewing Windows and Temporary Adjudicators to Posts in Mexico to Keep Pace with Projected Workload Increases

To keep pace with the expected NIV renewal surge, State is increasing the total number of hardened interview windows in the consulates' NIV sections by over 50 percent before the demand peaks in 2011.<sup>11</sup> State added windows to the consulate in Hermosillo in fiscal year 2007 and will soon be adding windows to the consulates in Monterrey and Mexico City.<sup>12</sup> In addition, new consulate compounds in Ciudad Juarez and Tijuana will result in additional windows for adjudicating NIV applications.<sup>13</sup> The new facility in Ciudad Juarez is set to open in September 2008, and construction on the new building in Tijuana began this past April. Once completed, these projects will provide Mission Mexico with the window capacity to interview about 1 million additional NIV applicants per year.<sup>14</sup> Table 1 compares the number of interview windows available in fiscal year 2007 to the number that will be available by fiscal year 2011, when NIV demand peaks.

<sup>11</sup>These interview windows must conform to State's security standards to keep U.S. officials behind a hard line. A hard line is a system of barriers surrounding a protected area, which may afford degrees of forced entry, ballistic resistance or blast protection.

<sup>12</sup>Hermosillo received a consular upgrade, which added eight hardened interview windows along with improvements to the waiting area, at a cost of \$5.5 million. The estimated costs of adding windows to Monterrey and Mexico City are \$1.3 million and \$1.1 million, respectively.

<sup>13</sup>The estimated costs of new compounds in Ciudad Juarez and Tijuana are \$96 million and \$92.7 million, respectively.

<sup>14</sup>State assumes that adjudicating officers would typically conduct 23,400 interviews of NIV applicants per window per year. This number varies depending on the conditions at individual posts.

**Table 1: NIV Interview Windows in Fiscal Years 2007 and 2011**

Post	Number of NIV windows in FY 2007	Number of NIV windows in FY 2011	Expected date for additional windows
Ciudad Juarez	11	23	September 2008
Guadalajara	10	10	
Hermosillo	13	13	
Matamoros	7	7	
Merida	4	4	
Mexico City	15	23	August 2008
Monterrey	10	26	February 2009
Nogales	6	6	
Nuevo Laredo	7	7	
Tijuana	14	30	September 2010
<b>Total</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>149</b>	

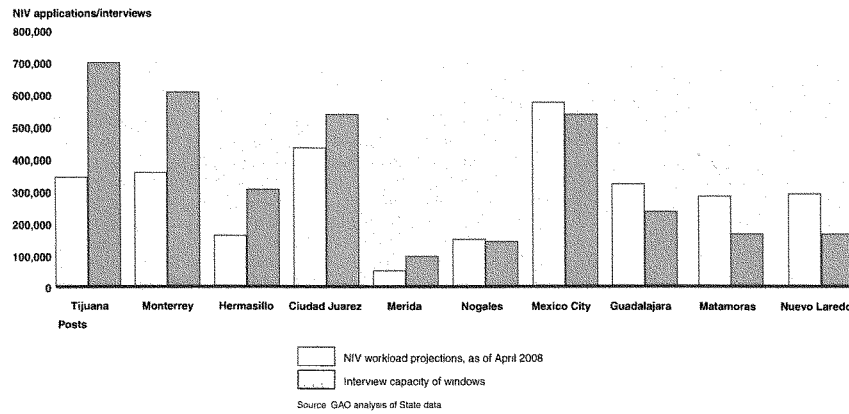
Source: GAO analysis of State data.

Note: Some of these windows are typically reserved for enrollment functions as part of the visa application process, which would limit their availability for interviewing applicants. The new facility in Ciudad Juarez will have 89 windows available for NIV and immigrant visa adjudications, although State estimates that Ciudad Juarez will need only 23 of these windows for NIV applicants.

Consulate officials at the posts we visited generally expressed confidence that they will have sufficient window capacity to keep pace with the expected NIV demand and avoid excessive wait times for interviews beyond State's standard of 30 days. As shown in figure 3, our analysis of expected window capacity also indicates that Mission Mexico generally appears to have enough window capacity to keep pace with projected demand, based on the April 2008 projections. However, State officials acknowledge that two posts, Nuevo Laredo and Matamoros, will not have adequate window capacity during the NIV surge. Consequently, NIV applicants may face longer wait times for an interview appointment at these posts. State officials noted that individuals who would typically apply at one of these two posts will have the option to schedule appointments at the relatively nearby consulate in Monterrey, which is expected to have excess window capacity during the surge in demand. At other posts, the potential shortfall in window capacity, reflected in figure 3, appears to be small enough that it can likely be managed by extending hours that windows are open, if necessary. Although Guadalajara also appears to have a significant shortfall, consular officials there believe the post should be able to absorb the increased workload with the number of

windows available as long as they have enough staff to work the windows in shifts to keep them open all day, if necessary.<sup>15</sup>

**Figure 3: Comparison of Projected NIV Demand to NIV Window Capacity in Fiscal Year 2011**



Note: Window capacity is based on State's estimate of an average of 23,400 interviews of NIV applicants per window per year (number of windows, multiplied by 23,400). Workload projections are as of April 2008 and were generated by State, with the exception of Nuevo Laredo and Nogales. Consular Affairs did not have sufficient data to generate its own projections for these two posts and, therefore, relied on projections from the CAFS.

**State Plans to Hire Temporary Adjudicators**

In addition to the increase in hardened windows, Mission Mexico requires a significant increase in adjudicators over the next few years. Based on NIV and passport workload projections, provided in April 2008, State

<sup>15</sup>Officers in high-demand posts in Mexico, such as Guadalajara and Mexico City, are expected to conduct 120 interviews per day (20 interviews per hour at windows 6 hours per day). If windows are kept open 8 hours, window capacity could be expanded well beyond State's estimate of 23,400 interviews per year. Assuming windows are open 200 days a year, 20 interviews per hour for 8 hours would result in 32,000 interviews per window, per year.

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estimates it will need 217 adjudicators throughout Mission Mexico in fiscal year 2011, which is the expected peak year of the surge in NIV demand.<sup>16</sup> This number is an increase of 96 adjudicators, or about 80 percent, over the number of adjudicator positions in place in fiscal year 2007. State may revise its staffing plans as it generates updated forecasts.

State plans to meet its staffing needs during the expected workload surge primarily by hiring a temporary workforce of consular adjudicators that can be assigned to posts throughout Mission Mexico, depending on each post's workload demands. Figure 4 shows the number of temporary adjudicators and career adjudicators planned for Mission Mexico in fiscal year 2011. State officials noted that relying on a temporary workforce allows Mission Mexico to avoid having excess staff after the workload surge and reduces costs per staff compared to permanent hires.<sup>17</sup> State has budgeted for about 100 temporary adjudicators to be in place during the surge in workload demand, although State officials noted that these budgeted funds could be reprogrammed if fewer than expected adjudicators are needed.<sup>18</sup> State has already posted the job announcement on its Web site and expected to begin placing these additional temporary adjudicators at posts in fiscal year 2009. State officials noted that they will try to fill slots gradually to help posts absorb the additional staff.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>State assumes that officers would each typically adjudicate 16,000 NIV applications per year, although productivity varies depending on conditions at a given post, according to State officials. State also assumes that consular officers working in posts' American Citizen Services section would typically handle 2,000 passport applications in addition to other responsibilities, such as emergency services for American citizens.

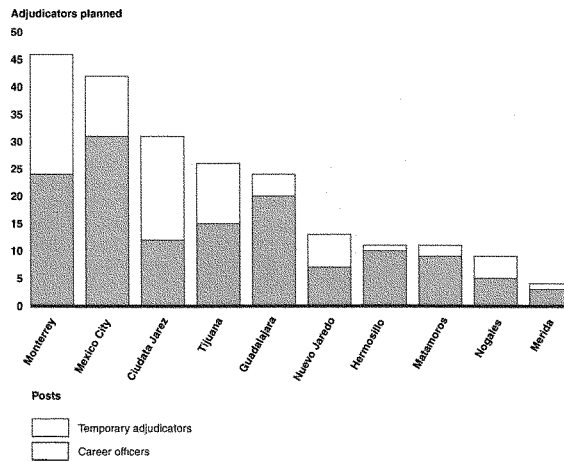
<sup>17</sup>State estimates the first-year costs of each roving adjudicator to be \$120,397 per person, and second-year costs to be \$106,397. According to State, career Foreign Service officers would have first-year costs of about \$400,000 and second-year costs of about \$200,000.

<sup>18</sup>Fiscal year 2008 start-up costs were estimated to be about \$6.5 million for this program, with ongoing costs of about \$11.3 million in fiscal year 2009 and \$14.5 million in each of the fiscal years 2010 and 2011.

<sup>19</sup>State's plan for temporary adjudicators envisioned hiring 43 adjudicators in fiscal year 2008, 35 in fiscal year 2009, 24 in 2010, and 15 in 2011. According to State officials, no temporary adjudicators have been hired thus far in fiscal year 2008 because Mission Mexico has not yet required them to keep up with workload. Some of the staff hired in the latter years of the surge will be replacements due to turnover.



**Figure 4: Temporary Adjudicators and Career Adjudicating Officers Planned for Fiscal Year 2011**



Source: GAO analysis of State data.

The temporary hires will be commissioned as consular officers with 1-year, noncareer appointments that can be renewed annually for up to 5 years. They will also receive the same 6-week Basic Consular Course at the Foreign Service Institute<sup>20</sup> in Arlington, Virginia, as permanent Foreign Service officers. These individuals must be U.S. citizens, obtain a security clearance, and be functionally fluent in Spanish. Housing in Mexico for the temporary adjudicators will be arranged for by the State Bureau of Consular Affairs in Washington, D.C., through contract services, which

<sup>20</sup>The Foreign Service Institute is the federal government's primary training institution for officers and support personnel of the U.S. foreign affairs community, preparing American diplomats and other professionals to advance U.S. foreign affairs interests overseas and in Washington.

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will provide greater flexibility to move adjudicators from one post to another, if necessary.

As figure 4 indicates, posts in Monterrey, Mexico City, Ciudad Juarez, and Tijuana are expected to be the heaviest users of temporary adjudicators. Consequently, these posts would be at greatest risk of increased NIV backlogs if temporary adjudicator slots cannot be filled as needed or if their productivity is not as high as anticipated. However, State officials believe they have an adequate pool of potential candidates from among returning Peace Corps volunteers, graduates of the National Security Education Program,<sup>21</sup> eligible family members,<sup>22</sup> and retired Foreign Service officers. These officials noted that they recently began reaching out to targeted groups of potential applicants and have already received strong interest. Furthermore, officials from the posts we visited were confident that State's plan to provide them with additional consular officers would enable them to keep pace with workload demand. Post officials anticipate the same level of productivity and supervision requirements as they would expect from new career Foreign Service officers. The officials noted that new consular adjudicators typically take about 2 months of working the NIV interview windows to reach the productivity levels of more experienced adjudicators.

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**New Processing Practices  
May Help Mission Keep  
Pace with NIV Demand**

State began a pilot program in the spring of 2008 at two posts, Monterrey and Nuevo Laredo, to outsource part of the NIV application process, including biometric data collection, to an off-site facility.<sup>23</sup> The pilot is part of an effort by State to establish a new service delivery model for processing visas worldwide in response to long-term growth in demand for

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<sup>21</sup>The National Security Education Program provides fellowships to enable graduate students to add a specialization in area study, language study, or increased language proficiency to their graduate education in exchange for a commitment to work for the federal government.

<sup>22</sup>"Eligible family members" serve in embassies and consulates around the world. State's *Foreign Affairs Manual* (3 FAM 8212(b)) defines an eligible family member as a U.S. citizen spouse or a U.S. citizen child who is at least age 18, and who, in either case, is on the travel orders of a Foreign or Civil Service employee or uniformed service member permanently assigned to or stationed at a U.S. Foreign Service post or establishment abroad or at an office of the American Institute in Taiwan abroad, and who does not receive a U.S. government retirement annuity or pension based on a career in the U.S. Foreign, Civil, or uniformed service.

<sup>23</sup>These off-site facilities are referred to as "Applicant Service Centers."

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visas.<sup>24</sup> State envisions expanding this model throughout Mexico and other high-demand posts worldwide through a formal request for proposal process. State also envisions the possibility of providing off-site data collection facilities serving NIV applicants in cities that do not have consulates. In Monterrey, the pilot made space available in the consulate facility to add much needed NIV interview windows.

The pilot is implemented by a contractor that handles functions that do not require the direct involvement of a consular officer, including scanning of applicants' fingerprints and passports, live-capture digital photograph, and visa passback.<sup>25</sup> Consular officers at these two posts focus on their "core mission" of making adjudication decisions after the contractor has electronically transferred the applicants' application and biometric data. The cost of outsourcing these functions is covered through an additional fee of \$26 paid by the applicants.<sup>26</sup> Consulate officials at the posts involved in the pilot are responsible for monitoring the performance of the contractor through the use of surveillance cameras, random visits to the off-site facility, and validation reviews of NIV applications to check for incidence of fraud or incorrect information. According to State officials, the contractor does not have the ability to alter any of the data it collects, and a U.S. citizen with a security clearance is on site to manage the facility. Consular officials in Monterrey stressed the importance of monitoring contractor employees to help ensure they do not coach applicants.<sup>27</sup>

State officials stated that the department intends to assess the pilot to ensure that the technological challenges of remote biometric data collection and data transfer have been overcome. They will also assess whether the new software involved presents the data to consular officers

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<sup>24</sup>In January 2006, the Secretaries of State and Homeland Security announced the Rice-Chertoff Joint Vision: Secure Borders and Open Doors in the Information Age, which included the goal of developing efficient processes to improve security while facilitating travel to the United States. State has included off-site visa processing as part of this joint vision statement.

<sup>25</sup>The pilot is being implemented by the company that currently provides a telephone call center and appointment scheduling service to NIV applicants in Mexico. State modified the existing contract with this company to add these additional services. The contract expires on January 31, 2009.

<sup>26</sup>This fee is in addition to the \$131 visa application fee.

<sup>27</sup>Contractor employees are prohibited from providing advice or guidance to visa applicants and are not to be involved in the visa decision-making process.

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in a user-friendly format to facilitate the adjudication. In addition, State will monitor adjudication rates at the participating posts. State has neither established specific milestones for completing the pilot nor provided us with any metrics that would be part of an assessment of the potential impact on productivity, fraud, or security.

In another step to help posts keep pace with NIV demand, Mission Mexico has also begun to waive interviews of NIV renewal applicants allowable under certain circumstances established by federal law and State regulations. State recently provided guidance to posts worldwide on waiving interviews for certain applicants, following the transition to the collection of 10 fingerprints and technology allowing reuse of fingerprints. The policy only applies to applicants seeking to renew their biometric NIVs within 12 months of expiration. Consular officers retain the discretion to require any applicant to appear for an interview, and no applicant may have an interview waived unless they clear all computer-based security screening. According to State guidance, consular officers will also have the discretion to waive interviews of applicants as part of the off-site data collection model being piloted in Monterrey and Nuevo Laredo, when prints collected off site match with the applicant's fingerprints already in the system. According to State officials, this will be possible beginning in 2009, when Border Crossing Cards issued after 1999 containing biometric data start to expire.

The Monterrey and Ciudad Juarez posts have already begun to waive interviews of applicants renewing NIVs and found significant productivity gains.<sup>28</sup> As a result, officers there were able to adjudicate cases more rapidly and better utilize window capacity, according to consular officials. These posts also found no significant difference in denial rates for NIV renewal applicants who were interviewed compared to those whose interviews were waived, although post and Bureau of Consular Affairs officials noted it was necessary to continue monitoring the effect of waiving interviews. These officials also highlighted the need to adjust consular training to be consistent with State's current guidance on waiving interviews under certain circumstances.

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<sup>28</sup>Monterrey waived interviews of certain NIV applicants as part of a pilot program from August to December 2007. The post discontinued the program after the departure of a cleared U.S. citizen employee who collected and verified fingerprints without requiring the involvement of a consular officer.

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**Efforts to Meet Increased  
Passport Demand**

Posts in Mexico will also be increasing resources for adjudicating additional passport applications, which are expected to peak in fiscal year 2009. Although the volume of passport applications is much smaller than NIV applications, adjudicating passport applications for American citizens takes precedence over NIV applications. Consular officials at posts we visited noted that because of the uncertainty over future passport demand, they will depend on their flexibility to shift adjudicators from NIV work to passport work, as needed. In addition, consular officials stated they will have the option of using NIV interview windows to adjudicate passports applications—possibly during off hours, if necessary.

In addition, posts are seeking ways to become more efficient in how they process the increasing volume of passports. For example, many posts have recently implemented an appointment system to better manage the flow of passport applicants and have also improved their Web sites to help provide better assistance to applicants, many of whom do not speak English and are applying for passports for the first time. State is also upgrading its software used for passport processing in overseas posts to enable posts to scan passport applications, which they expect will reduce staff resources needed for data entry. Some posts are also considering increased use of consular agents in other locations, such as Puerto Vallarta or Cabo San Lucas, to accept passport applications to help relieve some of the workload for consular staff. In addition, some posts have suggested exploring possibilities for processing passport renewals by mail, which would also help relieve overcrowding.

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**Concluding Remarks**

In anticipation of the expected surge in demand for NIVs and U.S. passports in Mexico over the next several years, State has taken several steps to project workloads and expand the capacity of its consulates to avoid the type of backlogs that have occurred in Mission Mexico in the past. State's efforts to increase the number of hardened interview windows at several of its consulates and hire additional temporary consular officers represent a substantial increase in resources needed to keep pace with the projected surge in NIV and passport workload. As State continues to revise its estimates of future workload, it may need to adjust its plans for increasing these resources to reflect the latest assumptions about future demand for passports and NIVs. The success of the efforts to prepare for the surges in passport and NIV workload is likely to depend on State's ability to fill the roughly 100 slots it has budgeted for temporary adjudicators in time to meet the surge in workload. Several posts in Mexico will rely heavily on these additional staff to keep pace with expected demand for NIVs and avoid excessive wait times for interviews

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of applicants. However, State officials have expressed confidence that they will be able to fill these positions with qualified candidates. In addition, Mission Mexico may reap productivity gains from a pilot program to outsource part of the NIV application process at off-site facilities and from State's policy to waive interviews for some renewal applicants; however, these efforts are in their early stages and are not yet widely implemented. Consequently, it would be premature to assess the potential effects of these efforts. We discussed this testimony with State officials, who agreed with our findings.

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Mr. Chairman, this concludes my prepared statement. I would be happy to answer any questions you or other Members of the Subcommittee may have at this time.

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**GAO Contact and  
Staff  
Acknowledgments**

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Mr. TOWNS. Let me thank all of you for your testimony, and let me move very quickly to you, Mr. Edson. And I would like to start by saying the State Department plans for handling the upcoming demand for border crossing cards seems to be a good one, but we are still concerned about the contract with CSC.

Contracting experts say it's generally poor practice to use a letter contract, such as the one between State and CSC, because it does not specify price or costs. This is the type of contract we generally associate with concession sales at our national parks, not with anything like the important business of collecting visa application information, and this is a very important and very serious situation.

Why didn't you take the time to draft a formal contract versus a letter? This seems to be very important, and I can't figure out why you would just do a letter and not a contract.

Mr. EDSON. Thank you for that question.

We actually had a preexisting arrangement with CSC in Mexico to provide user-paid information services and to assist in managing our appointment system, so in a sense it was a concession during the time it was being run as a letter contract. We have amended that contract to allow for CSC to help with this pilot program.

Because we are interested in a full and open competition with a regular RFP. We were concerned that we needed to know more about this new business model, have enough detail concerning this new business model, so we could do a regular detailed statement of work in conjunction with a normal contracting model. That statement of work is being worked on as we gain more experience with the pilot and as soon as we're satisfied that the pilot is completed and has been successful, we plan—hopefully, by the end of the calendar year—to release a regular RFP onto the street.

Mr. TOWNS. We know that the original contract for the call center in Mexico was competed, but then it was extended to include the work of the offsite data center pilot program.

Why wasn't a contract for this work competed?

Mr. EDSON. At the time we began working on this new technology, this new business model for us, we were concerned that competing it would move us too far out into the BCC renewal period. By the time we competed the pilot and then did a full—a regular competition for the worldwide use of this model, if and as appropriate, we thought we would be too far into the BCC renewal period and that we ran a risk then of not meeting the demand.

So we thought we were better off with an amendment to run a pilot to get the information we needed for a regular competition.

Mr. TOWNS. I understand that this is a pilot program, and you may extend this model to other countries if it's successful. Will those contracts be competed? Or will they be letter contracts as well?

Mr. EDSON. We are discussing with our acquisitions folks at the Department of State the best contracting model to use; that is something that still has to be determined. We would like to have something as rigorous and fully and transparently competed as possible.

Mr. TOWNS. Well, it just seems to me that for something that is as very serious as this—I mean, that a official kind of contract



would be drawn up. I don't understand why you would just do it by letter.

Mr. EDSON. Right at this point, we're only doing that because we extended the existing arrangement for pilot purposes.

Mr. TOWNS. The State Department and Customs and Border Protection—at this point, I'm going to yield to my colleague.

Go ahead. I yield to the gentleman from San Diego.

Mr. BILBRAY. First of all, let me premise this whole discussion based on—are all three of you aware of what's going on along the border right now? Do you realize that 1,300 people have been murdered along our border on the other side? Do you comprehend why so many people are being killed and what is happening there, where you have law enforcement officers crossing into the United States asking for asylum?

I only bring this up to just show you the degree of threat not only of bad guys getting across the border, but the degree of corruption and infiltration into our own operations.

Does anybody of the three panelists know what “silver or lead” means, the term “silver or lead?”

Mr. Ford.

Mr. FORD. Yeah, I know what it means. We just issued a report on the problem in Mexico, by the way, last said October that basically the problem with law enforcement there is; and the “silver and lead” analogy is basically: if you don't take the payments from the drug traffickers, they're going to kill you. So—

Mr. BILBRAY. And that is the point. And I will tell you something. I only—I just wanted to start off with that.

Just understand, this is a pressure cooker of corruption, a threat, and I just think those of us here in Washington have no idea how bad it is. And I will say this publicly. It's so bad that I'm trying to get my daughter to move away from 2 miles from the border on our U.S. side.

So that is the precedent. With 1,300 people—murdered it basically means, You take my silver or I'm going to shoot you or your family.

That can be a very persuasive argument, and my concern is, as we move forward, we are not naively operating in an environment that is Peyton-Place-By-the-Sea. This is a very ugly world that we're confronting along the frontera.

With that, I think I can't overstate the threat of our systems being compromised, and not just our documents, but our entire operations. It's hard to think that corruption somehow or that influence of “silver or lead” is somehow going to be protected because of the Mexican border, especially then, because so much of our operations even have to be done in the foreign country where this battle is going on.

I guess, DHS, my question to you is, if you discover that our security features have been compromised or simulated with relative ease, are you prepared to make a significant change of security measures to counter that threat?

Ms. MANAHER. In terms of the document, sir?

Mr. BILBRAY. Document and operations.

Ms. MANAHER. Yes, sir. And I think it's important to note that as we move with this radio frequency technology that we will actu-

ally be able to go back to the issuing source. So, right now, our officers, our land border is vehicle-based; it's not person-based. So once we deploy to WHTI, we will move from a vehicle-based system to a person-based, meaning we're actually going to go back to the Department of State and pull up that information for our officer. All queries will be done in advance of that vehicle even approaching that officer.

Mr. BILBRAY. You're talking about operations. What I'm saying is, if the documents been compromised, if the procedure for receiving the information and executing it and getting it to whomever is compromised, do you have a contingency plan to modify the operation in time to protect the American people?

In other words, if you are compromised, if the technology you have chosen gets compromised, is there a backup plan B?

Ms. MANAHER. Yes. If they could somehow—with the RFID, all the card readers also have the machine-readable zone that can also be used.

Mr. BILBRAY. What percentage of machine-readable is going to be available?

Ms. MANAHER. Right now, almost all of the travel documents that are issued.

Mr. BILBRAY. I'm talking about ports of entry.

Ms. MANAHER. We have deployed machine-readable technology to all lanes at all land border ports of entry.

Mr. BILBRAY. Every one? Tecate, all the way down?

Ms. MANAHER. Yes, sir. They all have them.

Mr. BILBRAY. For this technology that is available right now?

Ms. MANAHER. For the current technology on the machine-readable zone.

Mr. BILBRAY. I'm talking about the new technology.

Ms. MANAHER. We are starting that now, sir, and we will have that fully deployed with our schedule, of course, with construction limitations by April 2009, sir.

Mr. BILBRAY. So your face-recognition technology will be available by 2009?

Ms. MANAHER. Our RFID technology reader system will be available by April 2009 at the top 39 land border ports of entry, yes.

Mr. BILBRAY. And your technology will have fingerprint and face-recognition technology?

Ms. MANAHER. It will have the facial. It will go back and pull up the original face of the passport card to the officer—will be our facial biometric picture.

Mr. BILBRAY. Just the picture?

Ms. MANAHER. That's right, sir.

If the officer feels that there is any type of imposter or any situation going on, he could refer that off of vehicle primary, refer that to secondary, at which time that officer can do a full biometric query back to—

Mr. BILBRAY. But that card itself does not have the finger biometric on it?

Ms. MANAHER. It does not.

Mr. BILBRAY. So the facial biometric is the only biometric you're using in this technology?

Ms. MANAHER. Correct.

Mr. BILBRAY. I remember in our REAL ID legislation—that, if you want to compare this to our REAL ID legislation where—Mr. Chairman, I remember the debate that we were talking about, two out of three, so that there were two biometric systems to confirm within the cards. Has that gotten lost somewhere down in translation?

I remember specifically, there were three debates. I happen to have worked on this during my sabbatical the voters gave me for 5 years.

Mr. TOWNS. Welcome back.

Mr. BILBRAY. Thank you. It's always great to have an environmentally sensitive district that is willing to recycle Congressmen.

But I remember it was either your finger, the face recognition, or the retina scan. Now, that has gotten lost somewhere down the line. Now we're just going to the face recognition—

Ms. MANAHER. I was speaking of the passport card, sir. The border crossing card, as you know, takes a full set of fingerprints, and those are available to us in the secondary area for the border crossing card, for such a purpose.

Mr. BILBRAY. So, in other words, what—say you want to talk about, the confirmation of fingerprint is based on data already on file, and the card then opens up that data file, so then you can check?

Mr. EDSON. Correct. We collect 10 prints in conjunction with the application for a border crossing card. The first cards, when they were originally applied for, two prints were collected beginning of 1998, end of 1998; and then, of course, the photos are there as well.

Mr. BILBRAY. So the code goes in. So, de facto, you have fulfilled the REAL ID standard.

I want to make sure that—one of the things we have done in our hearings is found out that the Federal Government has not been upgrading all our IDs to the minimum standard that we set for the States, which is kind of hypocritical, and I, for one, have talked to the President about that.

But now we're talking about how this card is compatible with that. That is fine, but there are still major concerns with this. And my biggest concern is that we have two or three, like we require the States to have and what you're saying is, because it's on file and this card accesses this file, that fulfills the fingerprint biometric requirement.

Mr. EDSON. Correct. And the photo is on the card itself.

Mr. BILBRAY. Mr. Ford.

Mr. FORD. You know, we didn't really study this. We issued a report last year on this issue. I think the only comment I would make is that the potential vulnerability for the biometric fingerprints would be that primary currently can't access, so—but the tradeoff there is, if they started to do that, then you would have traffic issues.

Mr. BILBRAY. Talk about the ones they can't access.

Mr. FORD. Well, on primary inspection, it's my understanding, unless it has changed from a year ago, that the biometric fingerprinting is not—the primary inspector is not going to have access to that.

Mr. BILBRAY. Primary. That segues into secondary. He has to make that call. I understand that—I can understand procedurally as somebody who has crossed the border many times—not just to go surfing down south, either.

But let's—what happens with the identification of the biometrics, in other words, the fingerprints themselves? When you get the biometrics, what files or what records are available? You have—FBI files are available, right?

Mr. EDSON. Correct.

Mr. BILBRAY. Immigration files available?

Mr. EDSON. Correct.

Mr. BILBRAY. So you do not have any fire walls like local law enforcement has. You have access to all State and Federal biometric records there; California has had biometric fingerprints since 1978.

Mr. EDSON. We are fully integrated with DHS and with IAFIS, the FBI's fingerprint management system for criminal records. The fingerprints we collect are shared immediately with the IDENT DHS system; they're all actually stored with IDENT, with US-VISIT. A query then takes place against the immigration records, the DHS records, our own previous visa records, which are stored there for fingerprint purposes; and then passed through on the FBI's IAFIS prints data base. So we're getting all federally maintained immigration, visa and criminal—

Mr. BILBRAY. What is the possibility of local law enforcement having access to that data base? Do we have fire walls now that—

Mr. EDSON. Unless you're prepared to answer, I would have to take the question.

It's an issue that we have been working with law enforcement, local law enforcement, on through DHS and their colleagues at CJIC, the Criminal Justice Information Center, in West Virginia, the FBI operation out there for 4 years or so.

There are some technical issues. There is a lot of sharing going on. But I just, we would have to take the question to give you an—

Mr. BILBRAY. I think you understand why the San Diego County sheriff or the police department at El Paso would feel it's essential for them to be able to check, if they have fingerprints that they need to cross-check, that this be part of the data file that they're able to access.

Ms. MANAHER. I actually believe that US-VISIT has entertained a pilot program, I believe with Los Angeles County. But—we will take that as for a cue for US-VISIT, but I believe they are moving in that direction.

Mr. BILBRAY. Mr. Chairman.

Mr. TOWNS. Thank you very much. Thank you.

Let me come back to you again, Mr. Edson. The Competition in Contracting Act and the Federal Acquisition Regulation stipulate rules for awarding contracts. It appears that they were not followed, because they only apply when the contractor receives appropriated funds. In this case, CSC is providing its services on a user-pays system in which they receive payment for service directly from the application fees.

Does this mean that CSC has not been paid government funds of any kind for this contract?

Mr. EDSON. CSC was not paid government funds of any kind for the preexisting arrangement, the user-pays information services in Mexico. I am fairly certain that is still the case.

But I would have to take the question to confirm in detail with one of our acquisition folks.

[The information referred to follows:]

**Question for the Record Submitted to  
Deputy Assistant Secretary Tony Edson by  
Chairman Edolphus Towns (#1)  
Subcommittee on Government Management,  
Organization and Procurement  
House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform  
June 25, 2008**

**Question:**

What biometric data records are accessible as part of the 'secondary screening,' which may be necessary during border crossing inspections (FBI files, all State and Federal biometric records etc...)? What is the possibility of local law enforcement agencies having access to these databases?

**Answer:**

Under the Biometric Visa Program, visa-issuing posts around the world collect fingerprints of visa applicants and clear them against the DHS IDENT fingerprint system, which has a watchlist containing fingerprints of known and suspected terrorists, wanted persons, and immigration law violators. The visa applicant fingerprints are stored in IDENT. The visa applicant prints are also cleared against the FBI IAFIS fingerprint system, which contains criminal records, but they are not stored in IAFIS. Applicants cannot be issued visas until the IDENT and IAFIS clearances are completed.

When a person with a biometric visa arrives at a port of entry (POE), U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officers at primary inspection are able to match the person's fingerprints with the ones in IDENT to ensure that the person presenting the visa is the person to whom the visa was issued, thus preventing visa fraud. This biometric identity verification at POEs is a guarantee of the integrity of the U.S. visa because it has essentially eliminated the possibility of visa fraud through counterfeit or photo-substituted visas, or through the use of valid visas by imposters.

If the person is sent to secondary inspection, the CBP officers there will have the same access to screening through IDENT, and can also send fingerprints to IAFIS for screening.

Local law enforcement personnel currently have access to screening fingerprints through IAFIS. There is a cooperative undertaking between the FBI and the Department of Homeland Security to enable access by local law enforcement to biometric records in IDENT. For details on that undertaking you would need to contact the FBI and the Department of Homeland Security.

**Question for the Record Submitted to  
Deputy Assistant Secretary Tony Edson by  
Chairman Edolphus Towns (#2)  
Subcommittee on Government Management,  
Organization and Procurement  
House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform  
June 25, 2008**

**Question:**

During your testimony, you stated that, to your knowledge, Computer Sciences Corporation (CSC) “has not been paid government funds of any kind for the preexisting arrangement,” but you were unsure if this was still the case. Is it still true that CSC has not received any government funds?

**Answer:**

CSC has not received any government funds for its existing call center agreement, nor has it received any government funds for the offsite data collection pilot in Mexico.



**Question for the Record Submitted to  
Deputy Assistant Secretary Tony Edson by  
Chairman Edolphus Towns (#3)  
Subcommittee on Government Management,  
Organization and Procurement  
House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform  
June 25, 2008**

**Question:**

How do the Competition in Contracting Act and the Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) apply to State's contractual involvements with CSC? Even if FAR and the Competition in Contracting Act are not applicable, would not following the procedure in FAR and the Competition in Contract Act be the best practice to prevent criticism?

**Answer:**

The Department of State's agreement with CSC is not an "acquisition" for purposes of the Federal Acquisition Regulation because appropriated funds are not committed. See FAR 2,101; Fidelity and Casualty Company of New York, B-281281 (Jan. 21, 1999). Competition in Contracting Act competition requirements (41 U.S.C. 253) are also not applicable [Gino Morena Enterprises, 66 Comp. Gen. 231 (1987)]. The successor program to all user-pays services (including offsite data collection) will be the "Global Support Strategy" (GSS), which will provide for services contracted by the Department of State, tied to defined performance standards, and paid for with an adjusted MRV fee. The contract for GSS will be competed through the Department of State's Office

of Acquisitions Management in accordance with all relevant regulations and statutes. Because this successor contract will involve acquisition of services with appropriated funds, CICA and the FAR will apply.

**Question for the Record Submitted to  
Deputy Assistant Secretary Tony Edson by  
Chairman Edolphus Towns (#4)  
Subcommittee on Government Management,  
Organization and Procurement  
House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform  
June 25, 2008**

**Question:**

When questioned about the safety of the offsite data collection facilities run by CSC you stated, "We believe that the [offsite] facilities are best protected at this point by anonymity, even though ... they will be well known." Given the repeated attacks against our offices abroad in the past, how will these offices be kept safe? Whose responsibility will it be to protect them?

**Answer:**

One requirement for the offsite data collection pilot is that the location of these centers allows for easy and secure access by the public in an environment that does not detract from the image of the U.S. Government. The Monterrey Applicant Service Center (ASC) is located in a commercial area with its perimeter secured by an approximately 11-foot steel fence on all sides, allowing access only at the guard point on the east side of the facility. Security guards verify all access through this perimeter. Private security guards are also located at strategic locations and have been trained to maintain the security and safety of the ASC and its customers. Under GSS, the successor program to offsite data collection, we will establish uniform security standards as an element of the overall contract.

**Question for the Record Submitted to  
Deputy Assistant Secretary Tony Edson by  
Chairman Edolphus Towns (#5)  
Subcommittee on Government Management,  
Organization and Procurement  
House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform  
June 25, 2008**

**Question:**

What is the nature of the background checks performed for the employees of CSC's office data collection facilities? Do they receive full background checks or simply name checks as part of their employment?

**Answer:**

The American citizen manager/supervisor of the Applicant Service Centers (ASCs) in Mexico has a Moderate Risk Public Trust (MRPT) clearance from the Department of State's Bureau of Diplomatic Security. For all non-supervisory employees, CSC performs a local background check to include, but not be limited to, a police, credit, and social security records check. Our Consular Sections in Mexico also run CLASS namechecks on all prospective ASC personnel. Applicants must be free from derogatory information in their personal history to be approved for employment at the ASC, and are not permitted to begin employment prior to the completion of this process.

**Question for the Record Submitted to  
Deputy Assistant Secretary Tony Edson by  
Chairman Edolphus Towns (#6)  
Subcommittee on Government Management,  
Organization and Procurement  
House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform  
June 25, 2008**

**Question:**

During your testimony, you stated that it was unclear whether the optical stripe would have fit on the card design. However, the Subcommittee has reviewed design proposals for the card submitted to the State Department that do incorporate the optical stripe. Can you please explain this discrepancy?

**Answer:**

As Senior Advisor Derwood Staeben stated during an April 16 hearing before the Subcommittee on Border, Maritime and Global Counterterrorism of the House Committee on Homeland Security, in the written response to the Request for Proposal (RFP), GDIT (the prime contractor) submitted a primary card which was responsive to the RFP's requirements for security features (tactile feature, optical variable device (OVD), and a color-shifting ink feature). GDIT also submitted an optional card with a proprietary optical security stripe feature. GDIT offered only the primary card (without the optical stripe) as representative of their proposal for testing and evaluation. The contract award to GDIT was based on the

Department's evaluation of this primary card along with other criteria listed in the solicitation.

Mr. TOWNS. Why wouldn't we have the applicants pay the Treasury for the services and then pay CSC from the Treasury?

Mr. EDSON. That is certainly—that is a central issue as we look at the release of a request for proposal for a broader application of this technology and this work process. It's exactly that question: How do we fund it? And I think that is where we're going to end up with the money going to the Treasury and then the Department contracting directly in a more traditional model.

Mr. TOWNS. Let me just say that, you know, it's not legally required in this case probably, but wouldn't following the procedure in the FAR and the Competition in Contracting Act be the best business practice to prevent criticism?

Mr. EDSON. Again, I prefer to take the question. This was about 5 or 6 years ago, and I wasn't involved in this original award, the award with CSC for the information services in Mexico.

Mr. TOWNS. I must admit that I have some concerns.

Mr. Ford, let me go to you. It appears that State is taking steps to make sure that these visas are processed as quickly as possible, which is a top priority. The committee looks forward to reading a more detailed review of how well it works once more, as time has gone by.

How reasonable are State's forecasts of the demand for visas and passports?

Mr. Edson, how confident is State in your forecast? I just want to sort of move along. Both.

Start with you first.

Mr. FORD. We have looked at the methodology that the State Department is using to forecast both the NIV and the passports. We are much more confident of the NIV forecasts, because the primary basis for their forecasts are the outstanding border crossing cards that are already in existence. So they have a solid foundation of knowing how many cards are already there, and then the rest of the projection is based on how many new cards they believe they will need. So we are very comfortable with the projection process for the NIV cards.

We are less comfortable with the passport estimates, because there is no historical basis for the new passport requirement, and so therefore there is not a very good track record or foundation for basing the forecast.

But the reason we're a little less concerned about that is because, when you tie that to the workload requirements for more staff and for more facilities, the number of passports that are likely to potentially be needed is much, much smaller than the NIV. We're talking in the neighborhood of tens of thousands versus an increase of at least a million and a half.

So we're not super-comfortable with the passport forecasts, but we're not as concerned about them, whether—how accurate they vis-a-vis the overall workload, because the total numbers are not likely to be anywhere near the same as the border crossing cards.

Mr. TOWNS. OK.

Mr. Edson.

Mr. EDSON. We agree with GAO. We're not nearly as comfortable with the passport projections.

There are a large number of American citizens living on the Mexican side of the border, who have never had to get a passport before to travel into the United States. Because of that, we don't have any confidence that we know the number of American citizens that are there. If they never asked us for a passport or asked us for service, they have never come into contact with us.

We have done our best to estimate, but that estimation, as Mr. Ford mentioned, has a pretty high fudge factor. We are submitting, based on the best available data to us and surveys in the border community, about 40,000 passport applicants. We are planning for about 60,000 passport applicants. We currently have the capacity for that higher number which, as you can see, is a 50 percent increase over our original estimate.

On the border crossing card site, though, there were 5 million cards, give or take, issued during the period when the first border crossing cards were issued in the late 1990's, and some percentage of that 5 million will be the surge workload as it comes in for renewal. So we have a very definite upper end to the estimate with that estimate.

Mr. TOWNS. We understand that these offsite data centers will not be marked on the outside as being affiliated with the United States. We understand that, applicants will require appointments to enter the facilities. However, we all want to make sure that these facilities are as safe as possible. It will not be difficult for our enemies to find out where these facilities are, and they have attacked our offices abroad in the past.

Mr. Edson, how will these offices be kept safe? Will it be the State Department's responsibility? Whose responsibility will this be to protect them?

Mr. EDSON. Thank you for that question.

We are talking to the contractor, and we are certainly looking at this as one of the issues as we move forward with a request for a proposal. We have—we believe that the facilities are best protected at this point by anonymity, even though, as you point out, they will be well known as part of the visa process. That is just to be expected.

People will have appointments, they will need to go through them to get the fingerprints collected before their interview, but it's an issue that we're talking to our own computer people about as we move forward on the contract.

Mr. TOWNS. Let me ask you, Ms. Manaher—and I would like to get your views on it also, Mr. Ford.

Ms. MANAHER. I don't really think the Department has an opinion on the offsite application data collection.

Mr. TOWNS. I'm sorry?

Ms. MANAHER. On the offsite data collectionsites. I would have to take that back as a cue; I am not prepared to answer that, sir.

[The information referred to follows:]



<b>Question#:</b>	1
<b>Topic:</b>	Optical
<b>Hearing:</b>	ID Cards: Reissuing Border Crossing Cards
<b>Primary:</b>	The Honorable Edolphus Towns
<b>Committee:</b>	OVERSIGHT & GOV RFORM (HOUSE)

**Question:** Optical stripe technology is currently mandated on green cards as well as the present Border Crossing Card. Why do the new green cards as well as the new Border Crossing Cards not have optical stripe technology? Is there a reason not to include both radio frequency ID and optical stripe technology?

**Answer:**

The Department of State and Department of Homeland Security are responsible for the design, production, and issuance of Border Crossing Cards (Laser Visas) and Permanent Resident Cards. These cards are ultimately presented to U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officers at the ports of entry. The optical stripe technology associated with the Laser Visa and Permanent Resident Card allows for the comparison of the card information to the traveler. CBP believes that greater security is provided when CBP officers compare the information on the card with their observations of the traveler, as well as verify that information with the original database containing the traveler's biographic and biometric information. The capability for verifying the information against the original database now exists at all airport primaries and at all land border secondary locations. At this time, CBP is in the process of deploying that capability to all land border vehicle primaries.

All things being equal, vicinity RFID can trim six to eight seconds from the primary inspection process. Requiring a scan of the optical memory stripe (OMS) – will slow vehicle processing time, largely because the document must be inserted in a proprietary reading device to obtain the information contained within the OMS. In addition, OMS does not provide the ability to verify the information against a secure CBP system nor will it facilitate border crossing – which are critical requirements for CBP operating at the land border. The vicinity RFID capability provides for the electronic verification of the document – which means verifying the document with the issuing source – which is a significant security enhancement over physical features alone.

<b>Question#:</b>	2
<b>Topic:</b>	Tribal
<b>Hearing:</b>	ID Cards: Reissuing Border Crossing Cards
<b>Primary:</b>	The Honorable Edolphus Towns
<b>Committee:</b>	OVERSIGHT & GOV RFORM (HOUSE)

**Question:** As you know, a number of Native American tribal lands are located directly on, and often cross over, the U.S.-Mexico border. Some of these tribes have Tribal citizens who are also Mexican nationals. Since Tribal ID cards are accepted from American citizens under the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative, can Tribal IDs serve as Border Crossing Cards for the Native Americans who are Mexican nationals?

**Answer:**

Mexican citizens, including Mexican national members of federally recognized Native American tribes must present a valid passport with a B-1 / B-2 nonimmigrant visa or a laser visa Border Crossing Card (BCC) to enter the United States. WHTI does not change the document requirements applicable to Mexican nationals.

All Mexican nationals, unlike U.S. or Canadian citizens, were required prior to WHTI to possess a passport and nonimmigrant visa or a BCC in order to enter the United States. Therefore, with regard to Native American tribe members as well as all other travelers, WHTI is eliminating this historical exception to the passport requirement for U.S. or Canadian citizens while continuing current practices with regard to Mexican citizens and nationals.

Mr. TOWNS. OK, Mr. Ford.

Mr. FORD. Although we are not including that in our current study, we have done some work in the past regarding our safety and security of U.S. employees outside of the embassies.

But the Department, as a general rule, wants all of its employees to work in safe and secure buildings. That is why we're building all the new embassies overseas, to meet the new security standards.

With regard to private contractors, I'm not sure what the Department's policy on that is in terms of what types of security should be provided. I would think, however—since this is a pilot that could have global implications, it seems to me that the Department really does need to take a hard look at the security, particularly if they're going to operate these facilities in locations where we have hostile environments.

So I think it's something that should be included as part of the assessment that the Department makes in terms of the determining whether this is a useful thing for the Department to expand globally.

Mr. TOWNS. At this time, I yield to the ranking member.

Mr. BILBRAY. Thank you.

I just have to say one thing. If we really think that the bad guys aren't going to know where these facilities are, they will know about it as soon as the wiring starts going in. I just hope we're not betting on that.

But the optical strip is being maintained on the green cards. It's on the present BCC cards. Why isn't it being included in the new card?

Mr. EDSON. Thank you for the opportunity to address that particular issue.

When the competition was let, a wide number of cards were proposed for testing. We were able to select from a wide variety of security features that provide multiple or overlapping layers of security, both overt, covert and then the forensic. In that context, a number of things were proposed that we believe provide a secure document.

Our experience with the optical stripe was not uniformly positive and there were some issues with the stripe over time. But I think, more importantly, this was 10 years later, and we were looking at implementing a new card with a new format as a standard. It's a standard practice for us in terms of document security that each generation is altered to improve its security.

Mr. BILBRAY. Why doesn't the new green card have them?

Ms. MANAHER. I think it's important to note that the green card is currently going to have a CBP requirement, which is vicinity RFID made for Customs and Border Protection. I would have to take that back to the Department and CIS for the requirement—

Mr. BILBRAY. Is there a reason not to have both?

Ms. MANAHER. For Customs and Border Protection it is no longer an operational requirement for us for the optical memory stripe. We found it—

Mr. BILBRAY. The question is, is there a reason not to have both?

Mr. EDSON. On our card, when we looked at it, we believe that the security features we have are adequate, are more than ade-

quate, that this is actually a superior product in every way, and the old style card was easy to wash.

The optical stripe does peel over time. It scratches and it is difficult to read. It requires a proprietary reader that doesn't always function as advertised and was never deployed very widely.

As we looked at other options, we thought that the options we selected for use in the border crossing card provided us with a better package of security features.

Mr. BILBRAY. Has the optical card ever been falsified or used—has it ever been used to produce a false document?

Mr. EDSON. We have seen counterfeit optical stripes. I don't believe that they're readable. So that—

Mr. BILBRAY. So the problem is not that they're forgeable, the problem is that they may get destroyed somewhere down the line? Or is it that the readers are proprietary, and you don't want to have to pay the proprietary fee?

Mr. EDSON. Well, no optical stripe was presented for testing as part of this contracting process, which I guess is core to this particular issue. But there were—again, from our perspective, the security features that were selected provided such deep, overlapping security to the card that it wasn't necessary to look at the optical stripe in addition to those features.

Mr. BILBRAY. That technology was presented, though, for a pass card wasn't it?

Mr. EDSON. For the passport card?

Mr. BILBRAY. In the pass card, the optical.

Mr. EDSON. The passport, it was not presented for testing by any vendor for the passport card, no.

Mr. BILBRAY. Let's get back to this secondary/primary check.

For the last few months that I have been going through international airports, when I have been coming in from south of the border or outside, it looked like every window had a finger reader on it, even the ones we were using as U.S. citizens.

They weren't using it for U.S. citizens, but was my observation correct that—

Ms. MANAHER. Yes, sir. It's correct.

Mr. BILBRAY. The booths are all manned?

Ms. MANAHER. In the air and sea environment, it is in all the primary lanes.

Mr. BILBRAY. May I make a suggestion, as a frequent user, as an American, I would like to be able to have the option to go ahead and go use the reader system somehow like the Clear Card is used. Because, if you go through international airports now, the system is working so good for foreign travelers that the backup for Americans is huge, because we're still using the old system for Americans.

Mr. Ford.

Mr. FORD. The last time I went through, I experienced what you're talking about.

Mr. BILBRAY. Exactly, and I'm just saying that I know we don't want to mandate this on U.S. citizens now, for political reasons, but at least we ought to provide the option so when an American is sitting there and seeing the foreign-born zipping through—let me say, the praise of the foreign travelers to our system has been

great. They love it. Instead of the 30 questions and all the other stuff about where your aunt is from or whatever, you go in, you get a positive and you move. And I think it's a great example that technology done appropriately can really free up the individual and avoid problems. And I just want to make that plug that there ought to be a way for us, like the Clear Card, to be able to access the system and use it. Because the card, the readers are there, not being used on the U.S. side.

But that aside, let me take you to task on that. The ports of entry, the land ports of entry, you're proposing not to provide that—only those that are taking the secondary. And the issue is that it will take too long to use biometric confirmation?

Ms. MANAHER. No, sir. I just don't think the technology is there to meet our operational requirements.

We're still in a land border environment. We have an antiquated infrastructure. We have weather issues. We have a family of eight. It's just—

Mr. BILBRAY. I understand that. Even with the family of eight—and again as somebody who is going through again and again—we have the great technology now that while they're waiting in a line in a car, we're reading their license plate, aren't we? Long before they pull in, we have the technology, because of the waiting process, to be able to process people in a lot of different ways.

I will be very frank with you. I really don't think you're being aggressive enough at looking at how to use more technology on the land base and I think it really can help the process. I think it can speed up the process.

The trouble is changing the operational mind-set from what it has been since 1950 to what it can be now. And we're still stuck in the same border shack that I saw when I was sneaking down south to catch a couple of beers on Revolucion; and that mind-set is still there.

And believe me, the people checking there are my friends and neighbors. They have been my friends and neighbors my entire life, so I know the people that are in operation there.

But I really think that there is more you can do with technology. And secondary, as a backup, you still are asking an officer to make a judgment call at the primary port of entry like you have since 1950. The difference is, you may speed up the secondary check, but you're still having a slower process, because I don't think you're utilizing technology.

And I have seen the benefits at our airports. I really ask you to keep an open mind in applying it to that land base.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. TOWNS. Thank you. Thank you very much, and let me just run through this very quickly.

Ms. Manaher, there have been some who have said that the new design for the passport card and the border crossing card is not as safe as the older design. I'm very glad that you're here today, because there are people on both sides of this that I respect, you know. So maybe you can sort of straighten it out today and tell us in terms of whether it is or isn't, because we all want the documents to be as secure as possible. In your opinion, is the new de-

sign for the passport card and the border crossing card more secure than the design it is replacing?

Ms. MANAHER. Yes, in my opinion it is, sir. And remember, our primary officers have a very limited amount of time to make, you know, really quick judgments about the admissibility of folks entering the United States. The key to us is not so much the actual document itself, but rather the ability to go back to an issuing source and pull that information. So even if you have an imposter before you, you can look and see, well, wait a minute here, that is not the same guy who applied for this a few years ago. That issuing source, that ability to go out and pull back, takes away from even—makes the document through system connectivity a far greater security feature than an actual physical security feature for us.

Mr. TOWNS. Mr. Edson, this is my last question. Background checks for the employees of the data centers, do they receive a full check or only a name check? Could you tell me? Background check for the—

Mr. EDSON. I'll have to take the question. I'm not familiar with that part of the contract.

Mr. TOWNS. Because information—

Mr. BILBRAY. Anybody familiar with it? That is a big question. That is a huge question.

Mr. EDSON. They have access—we'll answer that question.

Mr. BILBRAY. It might affect the efficiency of the system if al Qaeda is issuing these cards.

Mr. EDSON. These—we are talking only about—I believe we are only talking about the employees who are checking to ensure that the applicant completed their on-line application completely, all the fields were completed and then took the fingerprints. The fingerprints and the data go through a series of security screens before they are admitted into our—on the other side of the firewall into our systems. And then when the applicant appears for the interview, their fingerprints are checked on a random basis. Our system generates a random request for the officer at the time of interview to reprint the applicant. But at that point the check has already been done, so the officer is just verifying that the prints that were collected offsite match the prints on the person in front of them at the time of interview. But that is why we believe this is perhaps not as important as it might be, but we will definitely answer the question.

Mr. BILBRAY. Mr. Edson, how many Mexican applicants are going to be physically interviewed? Are all the foreign nationals being physically reinterviewed as we reissue these cards?

Mr. EDSON. Today every applicant is being physically reinterviewed.

Mr. BILBRAY. Where?

Mr. EDSON. In the consulate sections in Mexico, not in the offsite data center. The law, the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act, in December 2004, provided the Department of State with the authority to waive interviews in a very limited number of cases for applicants applying for renewal of a visa in the same category within 12 months of expiration. We intend to use that capability if there are no other fraud indicators, but all these people who are renewing with the 10 prints collected offsite—the prints

will be matched against the two index prints collected at the time their original border crossing card was processed. There still has been a biometric confirmation through U.S. controlled data before we would ever entertain the idea of—

Mr. BILBRAY. From the old file?

Mr. EDSON. Correct, correct.

Mr. BILBRAY. Sorry, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. EDSON. Their biographic data would have to match. If there is a change in their name or something, we'll call them in.

Mr. TOWNS. Let me—why wouldn't the card be more secure if it included the optical stripe in addition to the other features? Wouldn't the card be more secure?

Mr. EDSON. The card—I can't answer the question simply yes or no. The card as put together has a number of security features that security experts, including the forensic document lab at ICE, the Secret Service, the International Reproduction Resource Center that is run by a consortium of central banks, including our own Federal Reserve Board, Sandia Labs—I mean, number of experts in documents tested these documents as part of the competition and we believe that we have a more secure document now than we had with the older card.

Mr. TOWNS. Let me go at it another way. Well, why wouldn't you include more security features rather than fewer, especially if they don't conflict with each other?

Mr. EDSON. At a certain point—I'm not positive. I don't know if we could have fit the optical stripe on this card. At a certain point, though, the number of features, the nature of those features, there are unprecedented—the Kinegram, for example, the hologram that is on the face of this card—if I could perhaps, I could share copies of the card to look at. The Kinegram is a mixture of transparent metallic features that is not used anywhere else in the industry. We've integrated into several layers of the card material. It is not actually pock stamped on top as is usually the case. So that it overlaps with the photo and with the biographic data. The photo and the biographic data are laser engraved. So once again they go through several layers of the card material.

This card has been produced in such a way that altering any of that actually destroys the card. Yes, it could be peeled apart, but then there would be nothing left. Any card—I showed you the BCCs we have now can be peeled apart, but then there would be nothing left of the card, because of the way it is put together. And we believe we have the best product for the need right now in this card.

Mr. BILBRAY. You don't believe that somebody with a hot knife might be able to have the technique to remove that physically?

Mr. EDSON. They couldn't. The card would be useless if they did. I mean, they could split the card into polycarbonate layers perhaps, but there would be nothing left to do anything with.

Mr. TOWNS. Well, let me thank all of you for your testimony, of course, and I still feel we have a lot of work to do. I really, really do. I think that, you know, we are a long ways from being there, and, of course, we have to continue to do that. And we are going to be here. We're not going to go away. I just need to just let you

know that, of course, so you can continue to work with us. And we want to be helpful where we can as well.

So thank you so much for your testimony.

Mr. BILBRAY. Mr. Chairman, I want to thank the panelists, too. And let me just say, look, we are going to be working on this, implementing it in the next 6 months, but we're going to be implementing it over the next couple of years. So it is going to transcend administrations. And I would just ask that you recognize that we have major concerns and we want to work with you to make this happen. And I just have to tell you, the concern we have is about why not use some of this. If it costs a little more—just understand this as being like the Kevlar vests that are protecting the neighborhoods instead of soldiers. You don't want to have to answer to your right, doggone it, if we just put a little more in, one more layer, that could have saved the community's life and then we could have stopped a breach.

So this thing is really scary. Sometimes I don't know how to emphasize how important the work you are doing. So that is why, please, both our offices are available to work with you, to dialog with you and ask you some tough questions. We want to make you uncomfortable so that you do the best job you're capable of doing so you can be—make sure that your grandchildren are safe.

Thank you.

Mr. TOWNS. Thank you very much. Thank you. Panel No. II, please come forward. Before you sit, just continue to stand and we'll swear you in. Then we won't have to get back up. Waiting on Mr. Alsbrooks.

[Witnesses sworn.]

Mr. TOWNS. Let me begin with you, Mr. Fuller. Mr. Aaron Fuller, the President of the Computer Science Corporation Enforcement Security and Intelligence Division. Welcome. We begin with you.

**STATEMENTS OF AARON FULLER, PRESIDENT, COMPUTER SCIENCES CORP., INC., ENFORCEMENT SECURITY AND INTELLIGENCE DIVISION; RICK PATRICK, SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT FOR FEDERAL PROGRAMS, L-1 IDENTITY SOLUTIONS, INC.; AND WILLIAM T. ALSBROOKS, FORMER GROUP VICE PRESIDENT, INFORMATION SYSTEMS CREDENTIAL TECHNOLOGY GROUP, GENERAL DYNAMICS**

**STATEMENT OF AARON FULLER**

Mr. FULLER. Thank you. Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Bilbray, and members of the subcommittee. Thank you for your invitation to testify at today's hearing. I am Aaron Fuller, President of CSC's Enforcement Security and Intelligence Division. I'd like to say just a few words about CSC followed by an overview of the contractual efforts performed by my organization that may be of interest to you today.

CSC is a leading global consulting systems integration and management services company with approximately 90,000 employees headquartered in Falls Church, Virginia, with reported revenues of \$16.5 billion for the 12 months ended March 28, 2008. I'm President of CSC's Enforcement Security and Intelligence Division, and



my clients include Department of State and other U.S. Government agencies.

We have two contracts with the Department of State in support of the Bureau of Consular Affairs. The initial CSC contracts for user paid visa services were competitively awarded in 2000 by GSA for the Department of State, and from the inception of these initial contracts, CSC has delivered visa information services and appointment scheduling support to 40 U.S. missions around the world.

CSC's work in Nuevo Laredo and Monterey is a 1-year effort under one of the contracts with a period of performance from January 2008 to January 2009. Our Applicant Service Centers [ASCs], in these two locations in Mexico are paid for by the applicants for nonimmigrant visas, not with congressionally appropriated funds. A proof of concept facility was opened in Nuevo Laredo on March 24, 2008 to service up to 65,000 applicants per year as required by our contract, and a pilot facility was opened in Monterey on April 18, 2008 to service up to 250,000 applicants per year, also as required by the contract.

I'd now like to quickly step through the typical applicant experience in those two facilities. A nonimmigrant visa applicant calls our visa information service phone number or accesses our self-service Web site to receive information about the visa process and to schedule appointments both at an ASC and at the local U.S. consulate. An applicant enters their application information on an electronic form available through a Department of State Web site.

On arrival at the ASC, there are multiple layers of security to ensure that each applicant has a scheduled appointment and the necessary visa application documents with them. A CSC employee now begins the data collection process. They retrieve the electronic record from the Department of State using the remote data collection software provided by State. Next the CSC employee checks the applicant's passport number and name to see that they match what the applicant entered online at the State Department Web site. The CSC employee scans the applicant's Mexican passport, collects a digital fingerprint from all 10 fingers and takes a digital photograph of the applicant. This digitized information is now in the applicant's electronic record in the State Department provided software. At that point, the State Department provided software automatically transmits the updated electronic information via the Internet to the State Department.

The last step in the ASC process is for the applicant to provide information to CSC's courier service for delivery of the applicant's approved visa if a visa is approved by the U.S. consulate. The applicant has now completed the ASC experience in CSC's service center. The applicant's next step is to attend their consulate appointment.

Through June 18, 2008, the Nuevo Laredo facility has averaged 50 applicants per day. The Monterey facility has averaged 400 applicants per day. All of our in-country staff members have undergone a Department of State name check by the local U.S. consulate. Employees of the ASCs are under the supervision of an American citizen who holds a security clearance issued by the U.S. Government.

CSC is pleased to be engaged with the Department of State in efforts to improve the efficiency of visa processing. We fully support the efforts of Congress and State and other Federal agencies to oversee, plan and deliver these services.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman and committee members. I would be pleased to answer any questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Fuller follows:]



**STATEMENT OF**

**AARON B. FULLER  
PRESIDENT, ENFORCEMENT, SECURITY, AND INTELLIGENCE DIVISION  
CSC**

**BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT MANAGEMENT, ORGANIZATION, AND  
PROCUREMENT OF THE  
COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM  
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**"ID CARDS: REISSUING BORDER CROSSING CARDS"**

**JUNE 25, 2008  
(Revised)**

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Bilbray, members of the subcommittee, thank you for the invitation to testify at today's hearing. I am Aaron Fuller, President of the Enforcement, Security and Intelligence Division for CSC's North American Public Sector. I would like to say a few words about CSC, followed by a brief overview of the contractual efforts performed by my organization that may be of interest to you today.

CSC is a leading global consulting, systems integration and managed services company. Our mission is to provide customers in industry and the public sector with solutions crafted to meet their strategic goals and enable them to benefit from the advanced use of technology. CSC consistently and successfully provides business and technology solutions tailored to a wide range of industries and government missions. Every day around the globe, we serve the diverse missions of governments. Our nearly 50 years of support to the U.S. federal government has extended to virtually every department, agency and major initiative. We also serve state and municipal governments in the U.S., and national and provincial governments in Canada, Europe, Asia and Australia. Our clients benefit from our experienced employees, collaborative culture and ability to manage highly complex programs with leading solutions providers worldwide.

With approximately 90,000 employees, CSC provides innovative solutions for customers around the world by applying leading technologies and CSC's own advanced capabilities. These include systems design and integration; IT and business process managed services; applications software development; web and application hosting; and management consulting. Headquartered in Falls Church, Virginia, CSC reported revenue of \$16.5 billion for the 12 months ended March 28, 2008.

CSC's North American Public Sector (NPS) is a diversified professional services organization that provides information technology, business operations and specialized engineering services for government clients throughout North America. NPS' 26,000 employees support clients' needs for operational effectiveness and operational efficiencies so that they may achieve excellence in their core missions. NPS has eight focused divisions: Applied Technology Division; Civil Division; Defense Division; Enforcement, Security & Intelligence Division; Government Health Services Division; Information Technology Infrastructure Solutions, Canadian Public Sector and Federal Consulting Practice.

The Enforcement, Security & Intelligence (ES&I) Division, which I lead, is responsible for systems development and related services, managed services, systems integration; and security offerings to clients in the foreign affairs, intelligence, law enforcement, and national security communities. As the president of that business, I am charged with stewardship of 4437 employees supporting federal government missions. CSC's ES&I business unit has two contracts with the Department of State in support of the Bureau of Consular Affairs. What follows is a general overview of the work performed by CSC under these two contracts.

The initial CSC umbrella contract for "user pays" was competitively awarded in 2000 by the General Services Administration on behalf of the Department of State in support of the Bureau of Consular Affairs. This service is currently provided to consular missions in 40 countries under two prime contracts. The contracts are geocentric, with one contract for Latin America and the Caribbean, and one for Europe and Africa.

The term "user pays" means that the services are paid for by the applicants for visa information services and not with appropriated funds. Thus, the visa applicants pay CSC directly for the services rendered.

With regard to the Visa Information Services provided in Mexico, CSC is tasked to fulfill customer service requirements for United States consular facilities in Northeastern Mexico by providing services to visa applicants applying for non-immigrant visas. Under the terms of our contract, we have opened a "proof of concept" Applicant Service Center (ASC) in Nuevo Laredo, Mexico, and a pilot ASC in Monterrey, Mexico. In both locations the services provided include:

- Provision of visa process information via a full-service call center and a self service website;
- Appointment scheduling for non-immigrant visa (NIV) interview and data collection;
- Collection of all ten fingerprints of NIV applicants;
- Live-capture digital photograph of NIV applicants; and
- Courier services for return delivery of visa and any supporting documents to approved applicant.

In compliance with our contractual requirements, CSC has opened a proof of concept facility in Nuevo Laredo to service 65,000 applicants per year. Also in compliance with our contractual requirements, CSC has opened a pilot facility in Monterrey to service 250,000 applicants per year. CSC opened the Nuevo Laredo proof of concept ASC on March 24, 2008. The pilot ASC facility in Monterrey, Mexico was opened on April 18, 2008. For the convenience of the applicants we service, these ASCs are open longer hours/days than the Consulates. Hours of operation for Nuevo Laredo are Monday through Friday, 10:00 to 8:00 and Saturday, 12:00 to 5:00. Hours of operation for Monterrey are Monday through Friday, 9:00 to 7:00 and Saturday, 8:00 to 1:00.

To provide the Subcommittee with more insight into the services CSC provides, I would like to step through the typical applicant experience with the services model employed in Nuevo Laredo and Monterrey. An applicant either calls our Visa Information Service or accesses the services via our self-service website ([www.usvisa-mexico.com](http://www.usvisa-mexico.com)) to receive information about the visa process and schedule appointments both at an ASC and the local U.S. Consulate. Applicants are able to select the ASC appointment times that are convenient for them. Every applicant is required to enter his or her application information on an electronic form available through a Department of State website (<https://ceac.state.gov/genniv/>). Once completed, the applicant prints a hard copy of the confirmation page that contains a barcode to bring with them to the ASC appointment.

On arrival at the ASC, there are multiple layers of security to ensure that each applicant has an appointment and the necessary visa application documents.

A CSC employee then initiates the data collection process. The CSC employee scans the barcode on the printed confirmation page brought by the applicant, which retrieves elements of the electronic record from the Department of State - provided remote data collection software. The CSC employees may not alter data in this record in any way. Next, the CSC employee checks the passport number and name of the applicant, scans the applicant's Mexican passport, collects fingerprints from all ten fingers, and takes a digital photograph. A barcode is printed and affixed to the applicant's confirmation page which is returned to the applicant. At that point, the Government-provided software automatically transmits the updated electronic form via the internet to the Department of State. The last step in the process is for the applicant to provide information to CSC's courier service for final delivery of the approved visa. The applicant has now successfully completed the ASC experience. The next step for the applicant is to attend the Consulate appointment.

We have the capacity to service approximately 250 applicants per day in the Nuevo Laredo facility. Through June 18, 2008, the facility has averaged 50 applicants daily. In Monterrey, we have the capacity to service approximately 1500 per day. Through June 18, 2008, the average number of applicants at the Monterrey facility has been 400 per day.

CSC is pleased to be engaged with the Department of State in efforts to improve efficiency of operations and to support the Department's needs. We highly value cooperative work with our government clients and industry partners to deliver services and information technology that serves domestic and foreign operations.

Our current contract has a period of performance of January 31, 2008 through January 31, 2009. Our pilot program on-site manager is an American citizen who holds a security clearance from the Department of State and all of our in-country staff members have undergone a Department of State name check by the local U.S. Consulate.

CSC fully supports the efforts of the Congress, the Department of State and other federal agencies to oversee, plan and deliver services that will meet the immigration challenges that lie ahead. Underpinning the delivery of products needed to secure and manage our nation's borders is the efficient use of state-of-the-art processes.

I appreciate the opportunity to provide these comments before the subcommittee on this important project and I look forward to any questions you may have. We at CSC also look forward to working with the subcommittee as you continue future deliberations on this issue.

Mr. TOWNS. Thank you very much, Mr. Fuller.  
Mr. Patrick. Push the button. Yes. Good, thank you.

#### **STATEMENT OF RICK PATRICK**

Mr. PATRICK. Good afternoon, Chairman Towns, Ranking Member Bilbray, and other distinguished members of the subcommittee. I'm Rick Patrick, Senior Vice President of Federal Programs for the Secure Credentialing Division of L-1. I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you to participate in today's important discussions. I plan on using my time to touch on a few highlights from my written testimony.

L-1 Identity Solutions is a portfolio of companies organized along four primary business areas, secure credentialing, biometrics, enrollment services and intelligence consulting. The Secure Credentialing Division focuses on creating secure identity documents such as passports and driver's licenses. We have designed over 2,000 card types and integrated well over 50 security features in these ID cards. We produce more than 35 million ID documents a year.

Most recently we have been awarded the passport card contract after a full and open competition run by the Department of State. In fact, we have already delivered the first 125,000 production cards to them. In addition, our contract calls for the production and design of the next generation border crossing card using the same production platform as the passport card.

To be clear, this contract is separate from the one that CSC was awarded for visa processing. Both the passport card and the border crossing card are aimed not only at enhancing security, but also at facilitating commerce and expediting passenger processing.

As set forth by the requirements of the Department of State and DHS, the two cards contain RFID technology to meet the operational requirements of CBP at land ports of entry.

The cards also incorporate a number of tactile and visual security features that prevent tampering and make it easy for an inspector to quickly ascertain its validity. Among these features are laser engraved photo and text, rainbow printing, color shifting ink, laser engraved tactile features, micro printing and an embedded optical variable device. In addition, there are many classified features we cannot describe in this open forum. Taken together, these features make it very difficult to counterfeit the card. As a result, these credentials will be among the most secure in the world.

With respect to privacy, the RFID technology embedded in the card does not carry any personal or biometric information. The chip contains only a number which is a pointer to a record in the government data base. Using this number, the traveler's information is retrieved from the government's data base via a secure connection so that the CBP officer has an opportunity to review it before the traveler arrives at the window. The use of the pointer number protects personal privacy, because no information is stored on the card and the data base record can only be accessed when the card is presented. If the card is lost or stolen, a CBP officer would be able to determine quickly that an imposter was using it either by comparing the photograph pulled from the government data base or as in the case of the border crossing card, by performing a bio-

metric match between the traveler's fingerprint and the one stored on the government's data base at secondary inspection.

Finally, as an additional privacy measure, an RFID shielding sleeve has been provided to U.S. citizens. The work to produce the credentials is being done here in the United States in a secured facility in Mount Pleasant, TN. The team L-1 assembled for this project is composed of well-established American companies. The individuals involved in the production process are vetted through the criminal background checks. The security materials we use to create the documents are not readily available in the marketplace but only to government agencies and vetted security printers.

As I conclude my testimony today, I would like to reiterate that we at L-1 take great pride in the work that we do in our partnership with the U.S. Government and we look forward to continuing to be a part of this critical discussion and once again appreciate the opportunity to appear today. I'd be happy to answer any questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Patrick follows:]

*“Reissuing Border Crossing Cards”*

Testimony Before the Government Reform & Oversight Subcommittee on Government  
Management, Organization and Procurement

Rick Patrick  
Senior Vice President, Federal Programs  
**L-1 Identity Solutions Secure Credentialing Division**

June 25, 2008



Good afternoon. Chairman Towns, Ranking Member Bilbray and other distinguished members of this subcommittee, I am Rick Patrick, Senior Vice President of Federal Programs for the Secure Credentialing Division of L-1 Identity Solutions, and on behalf of the Company, I appreciate the opportunity to appear before the Subcommittee to participate in this important discussion on reissuing border crossing cards.

Before I get into the topic at hand, I would like to provide a brief overview on L-1 Identity Solutions. L-1 Identity Solutions is a portfolio of companies offering a comprehensive set of products and solutions for protecting and securing personal identities and assets. This includes the design and manufacture of secure credentials, which is the focus of my division. Our other divisions focus on biometrics, such as facial, fingerprint and iris recognition technologies; fingerprinting services; and consulting services for the intelligence community. L-1 Identity Solutions is publicly traded on the New York Stock Exchange, with over 1800 employees worldwide.

The secure credentialing division of L-1 Identity Solutions provides a large portfolio of solutions comprised of hardware, software and services that are used to create and secure identity documents, such as passports, driver licenses, and other non-driver identification cards, that the world can rely on. We have designed over 2,000 card types and integrated well over 50 security features in these secure driver licenses and identity cards. On an annual basis, our technologies help produce more than 35 million identification documents, including the U.S. Passport for the last 9 years, the U.S. Department of Defense Common Access Card for the past 3 years, driver licenses for 15 States, and most recently, as you know we have been awarded a contract from the

Department of State to produce the new Passport Card. In fact, we have already delivered the first 125,000 production cards to the Department of State to begin issuing to the public. In addition, this contract also calls for the production and design of the next generation Border Crossing Card using the same printing and production platform as the Passport Card.

And so, for the remainder of my testimony, allow me to address (1) the application of these cards; (2) the security features they contain to prevent tampering and counterfeiting, (3) how the card design protects personal privacy and, (4) the care we take in the production and manufacture of these travel documents.

As you know, the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative led the Departments of State and Homeland Security to introduce the Passport Card as a less expensive alternative to the passport book specifically to meet the needs of border community residents who frequently cross the land borders between the US and Canada and Mexico. On the other hand, the Border Crossing Card, serves as a visa for Mexican citizens seeking to enter the United States for a short period of time for purposes like tourism or dealing with family matters.

As a result, both these cards are aimed at not only enhancing inspection process security, but also at facilitating commerce and expediting passenger processing. As set forth by the requirements of the Department of State and the Department of Homeland Security, both the Passport Card and the next generation Border Crossing Card contain RFID vicinity read technology to meet the operational requirements of CPB at the land ports of entry. They also incorporate a number of security features that prevent tampering and make it easy for an

inspector to quickly ascertain its validity. Among these features are laser engraved photo and text, rainbow printing (which is a gradual variation of printed colors that are difficult to photocopy or reproduce), color shifting ink (which changes apparent color depending upon the angle of reflected light), tactile features which are pressed or laser engraved, microprinting of characters which require magnification to readily see and are very difficult to copy, and an embedded Optical Variable Device, or OVD. In addition, there are many covert features that we cannot describe in an open forum. Taken together, these features make it very difficult to counterfeit or otherwise fraudulently modify the card. The result is that the Passport Card and Border Crossing Cards will be among the most secure in the world.

With respect to privacy, the NIST-certified Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) technology embedded in the card does not carry any personal or biometric information. The chip contains only a randomly generated number – different from the number shown on the face of the card – which is a pointer to a record in the Government database. Using this pointer number, the traveler's information is retrieved from the Government database via a secure connection so that the CBP officer has an opportunity to review information before the traveler arrives at the window.

The use of the pointer number protects personal privacy because no information is stored on the card and the database record can only be accessed when the card is presented. Moreover, the database record is sent directly to the CBP terminal via a secure Department of Homeland Security network. If the card is lost or stolen, a CBP officer would be able to determine quickly that an imposter was using it either by comparing the photograph pulled from the government

database or, as in the case of the Border Crossing Card, by performing a biometric match between the travelers' fingerprint and the one stored on the government's database at secondary inspection.

While both the Passport Card and the next generation Border Crossing Card will utilize RFID technology and the above described security features, other steps have been taken to ensure that a stolen Passport Card cannot be used as a Border Crossing Card. For example, both the artwork and OVD elements will differ between the two cards. This will provide an easily identifiable way to differentiate the two different type cards while standardizing the technology platform used at the border, again, keeping in line with the requirement to provide the highest level of security and privacy while facilitating traffic flow.

In terms of manufacturing both the Passport Card and the Border Crossing Card, they are credentials that are, or will be, as in the case of the Border Crossing Card, made exclusively in the United States. The team L-1 assembled for this project is composed of well-established American companies. The work to produce the cards is being done here in the U.S. in a secured facility in Mount Pleasant, Tennessee. The card personalization equipment is manufactured by a U.S. corporation at their facilities outside of Minneapolis. The individuals involved in the production process are vetted through criminal background checks. The security materials we use to create the documents – the inks and highly specialized consumables – are not readily available in the marketplace, but only to Government agencies and vetted security printers. We use a combination of secure printing processes and other special tools for creating the unique artwork designs I described earlier to further secure the card against alterations and tampering.

When applied to the Passport Card and the Border Crossing Card, these processes ensure the integrity of the credential and help to support the mission of the State Department and Homeland Security Department in managing and vetting the identities of travelers to the U.S.

As I conclude my testimony today, I would like to reiterate that we at L-1 Identity Solutions take great pride in the work that we do and in our partnership with the U.S. Government. We appreciate the need to balance security, privacy and the flow of commerce, and believe that the solutions we provide help to achieve those goals. We look forward to continuing to be a part of this critical discussion and once again appreciate the opportunity to appear before you today. I would be happy to answer any questions that you may have at this time.

Thank you.

Mr. TOWNS. Thank you very much.  
Mr. Alsbrooks.

**STATEMENT OF WILLIAM T. ALSBROOKS**

Mr. ALSBROOKS. Chairman Towns, Ranking Member Bilbray, and other distinguished members of the subcommittee, I thank you for the invitation to appear before you today.

A quick background. I retired from General Dynamics Information Technology in the fall of 2007, and today I run my own consulting firm called Great Bear Solutions Group. In the interest of full disclosure, I have served as a paid consultant to both OVD Kinegram and Lasercard. For almost 20 years, I was the Vice President in charge of the Credential Technology Group. Since 1995, my group deployed over 40 million secure ID cards of all types containing the most sophisticated security features known. DHS has stated that RFID infrastructure will be deployed to only 39 POEs. BCC cards will be used for identification where there are other places where there are no readers.

Given these facts, it is important to understand the following: these cards must provide for reliable, face value visual authentication. Features that require special readers are of little or no value to a Tier 1 inspector. If a secure ID card cannot be visually authenticated with an unaided eye, it is poorly conceived and easily compromised.

Unfortunately, the BCC card that the State Department intends to deploy will effectively lower the bar on ID card security for this generation of cards, which I believe poses a grave threat to our national security. The most durable, secure and tamper resistant card available for the American public is the card that has been developed for the permanent resident green card. This advanced technology card incorporates all of the security features specified for the border crossing and passport cards, including the RFID chip.

However, it is significantly more reliable on face-value inspection because of the inclusion of the latest state-of-the-art laser engraved optical stripe. It contains high resolution images, which function at a forensic level yet offer unsurpassed visual authentication when used only with an unaided eye.

The new card specifications for the BCC and passport cards do include overt, covert and forensic features; however, they rely heavily on security features most commonly associated with currency. Most of these features require the use of specialized tools to validate. All of these features are regularly simulated in counterfeit currency worldwide every day.

It is the nature of the secure document business and in the best interest of the American public that the best of breed proprietary single source technology be utilized in secure ID cards. Most of the technology that has been specified for the new card is single source. The OVD Kinegram was chosen by the State Department and separately sole sourced. The artwork is done on proprietary software. The color changing inks are single source. If scrambled indicia is used, it is a proprietary technology. Any type of traceable articulate or security threat will be proprietary and require proprietary readers.

The optical stripe is a proprietary single source feature. I believe that it offers a solid and unique security benefit and should be utilized. The Department of State has bet the whole farm on the visual security of the laser engraved personalization and the OVD Kinegram. Laser engraving on polycarbonate for personalization is not new technology. It is not unique, nor is it difficult to duplicate. It is not impossible to alter. And tactile features are not difficult to create.

I believe that laser should be used for personalization of these cards; however, it is not a feature that is going to stop a counterfeiter. Laser engravers are readily available, affordable for low volume counterfeiters and can be purchased on eBay.

OVD Kinegram produces an extraordinary optical variable device. It is a unique combination featuring both metalized and transparent materials. It has horizontal and vertical movement, color diffractive light shifting and multiple images. My group has used Kinegrams since 2002 and I recommend that Kinegram be used on these cards. It is the best of the breed in the world.

But all that glitters is not gold, and sophisticated holograms, both authentic and counterfeit, are now widely manufactured and readily available worldwide. Technology to produce holographic devices is not closely held. Unfortunately, it is a feature that can be simulated and will not stop an accomplished counterfeiter.

It is important to note that the Kinegram feature is not unique. It is not unique to an individual. They are visually all alike. Once the OVD has been compromised, a simulation can be mass produced.

Also of great concern to me is the fact that the Kinegram can be removed from a real card intact and reapplied to a counterfeit. I have one here that has been removed intact, this original Kinegram—and it can be applied to a new card. I would be glad to show this to you. Even though the card plans to embed the OVD under the top layer of the card, it can be readily separated using heat and a knife or any of several solvents, which can be purchased at local drug or hardware stores. Again, any accomplished counterfeiter will have no problem doing this once he gets his hand on an authentic card.

Today's state-of-the-art laser printing is actually being done utilizing an optical stripe. This technology does constitute a huge obstacle to counterfeiters. The new border crossing cards should continue to include an optical stripe. Only then can the State Department legitimately claim to be issuing the most durable, secure and tamper resistant cards available to the American public.

There are two distinct components to the overt features on the new cards, common images like portraits and statues that can be easily seen with a naked eye yet retain their integrity under 400 power magnification. Each optical stripe is now available in a 24-millimeter width, is uniquely personalized. These features have been designed in close consultation with a forensic document lab.

Mr. TOWNS. Mr. Alsbrooks, I hate to—

Mr. ALSBROOKS. I beg your indulgence.

Mr. TOWNS. When we get back, I'm going to ask you some questions. The only thing about it, we have to go vote.

Mr. BILBRAY. But we'll be back specifically—

Mr. TOWNS. We will suspend until 4:15. We will come back. OK? We have to go vote. They'll criticize you, you know.

[Recess.]

Mr. TOWNS. Let's continue. Let me begin with you, Mr. Fuller. Now, we are trying to get a better sense of why this contract was created the way that it was. Using a letter contract for this deal seems very unusual. A regular contract would have specified a sum that CSC would collect for its services, guaranteeing a certain amount of income. I don't mean to lecture you on how to conduct business, but wouldn't signing a regular contract in which State specified how much it would pay have been a safer business practice for CSC?

Mr. FULLER. Thank you for the question, Mr. Chairman. CSC responds to a wide range of types of government contracts, has a wide portfolio of types of contracts that we accept and this falls into that as a normal practice.

Mr. TOWNS. As a normal practice?

Mr. FULLER. A wide range of government contracts and this is one of several kinds that CSC responds to.

Mr. TOWNS. OK. Applicants must pay a \$26 fee for the data collection at the offsite centers. Who sets that fee?

Mr. FULLER. The fee was set by State Department.

Mr. TOWNS. What is the profit margin on the data collection? Do you know?

Mr. FULLER. These are pilot programs and we don't know how that will turn out yet. We've only been operating for 2 months and don't know the results.

Mr. TOWNS. We asked Mr. Edson about this on the first panel. L-1 announced last year that it hired Frank Moss, former Deputy Assistant Secretary for Passport Services for State Department as a consultant. Federal law prohibits former Federal employees from any acts, which gives them the appearance of making unfair use of prior government employment and affiliations. Mr. Moss' former position with the State Department put him in a position where he could have influence over the awarding of this contract. Do you agree that this could at least be perceived as a conflict of interest?

Mr. FULLER. Are you asking me, Mr. Chairman? I'm sorry.

Mr. TOWNS. Actually I'm going to ask you and Mr. Patrick. I'm going to ask both of you.

Mr. FULLER. I'm familiar with any of the contracts that—

Mr. TOWNS. OK. All right.

Mr. PATRICK. We publicly announced that we had hired Frank Moss as a consultant. As you probably know, we are a worldwide company interested in electronic passports around the world. Frank Moss as the ex-director was a very—

Mr. TOWNS. Is your mic on? Is your mic on? Push the button.

Mr. PATRICK. It is on.

Mr. TOWNS. Yeah. Good. Yeah, thank you.

Mr. PATRICK. I'm sorry.

Frank was very experienced in the rollout of the U.S. e-passport book program. That was one of the key reasons we hired Frank. As the ex-director, he was a resource that followed all the vetting and the rules and regulations as laid down by the State Department's exit or revolving door policy. I'm not sure of the name of it.



Mr. TOWNS. You know, the press release announcing the hire says that Mr. Moss will leverage his background to develop relationships with Federal agencies, driving identity-related programs. What do you mean by that?

Mr. PATRICK. I didn't write the press release, but I could—

Mr. TOWNS. But you're familiar with it, aren't you?

Mr. PATRICK. I read it before I came today. The other agencies that have credentialing programs going on and, to list a few, the DOD CAC card, HSPD-12, the TWIC card, passport card, enhanced driver's license. He had significant experience. So I believe there is a variety of Federal agencies that would look at him as somewhat of an expert.

Mr. TOWNS. Yeah. What role did he play in this contract? Do you know?

Mr. PATRICK. To my knowledge, he was an advisory, helps us understand a little bit about State Department processes, but that was the extent of it.

Mr. TOWNS. As we said during the first panel, we are concerned about the security at these offsite centers. Even if they are guarded and unmarked offices affiliated with the U.S. Government, they will always be potential targets for attack, whether they are here or abroad. If the pilot is successful, these offices may be established in other countries as well. Will CSC be responsible for the security of the offsite data centers?

Mr. FULLER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for the question. CSC has layered security procedures that—and activities at both of these pilot locations. I would prefer to describe those in a closed communication. I would rather not describe what our security processes and procedures are in open session?

Mr. TOWNS. I accept that. I accept that. Again, I understand why you would not want to.

Mr. FULLER. Thank you.

Mr. BILBRAY. For the record, Mr. Chairman, I think we need to discuss about having a closed session, specifically on these items.

Mr. TOWNS. Right. Without objection, we will do it. So ordered.

Mr. Fuller, we are happy to see that there is a plan in place to reduce delays in border crossing cards, applications. Even with the huge expected increase in demand, we do have some questions about the offsite data centers. Who will be training the employees at these facilities?

Mr. FULLER. The training is conducted by CSC.

Mr. TOWNS. How would their training compare to the training that the consulate employees receive and will this matter?

Mr. FULLER. I don't know the details of that comparison. I will get that answer for you, sir.

[The information referred to follows:]



August 14, 2008

Aaron B. Fuller, III  
President  
Enforcement, Security & Intelligence Division  
CSC – North America Public Sector  
3170 Fairview Park Drive  
Falls Church, Virginia 22042

The Honorable Edolphus Towns  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Government Management, Organization and Procurement  
Committee on Oversight and Government Reform  
U. S. House of Representatives  
2157 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515-6143

Dear Mr. Chairman:

I am pleased to provide the answers to the questions you requested in your letter of July 28, 2008, in reference to the testimony at the hearing titled "ID Cards: Reissuing Border Crossing Cards", on June 25, 2008.

Question 1: "Who will be training the employees at the offsite data collection facilities run by Computer Sciences Corporation?"

Answer: CSC is responsible for training all of its employees and subcontractor employees at the offsite data collection facilities run by CSC.

Question 2: "How will the training of the employees of these facilities compare to the training that the consulate employees receive?"

Answer: CSC is not provided information by the Department of State regarding the training of consulate employees and therefore is unable to respond to this question.

If there is any other assistance I can provide, please contact me at 703.641.2429 or [afuller5@csc.com](mailto:afuller5@csc.com).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Aaron B. Fuller, III".

Aaron B. Fuller, III  
President  
Enforcement, Security and Intelligence Division

Mr. TOWNS. All right. I appreciate that.

Mr. Patrick, I'm glad that you were able to testify on the security features of the new passport cards and border crossing cards today. The security of these documents is a high priority for this subcommittee. There is a lot at stake with the work your company has done on this project. However, some critics have said that this design is not as secure as the one it is replacing. What do you say to that?

Mr. PATRICK. As a solutions provider for the Federal Government, we go directly to the spec as written by, in this case DOS and DHS and we would follow the spec to the letter.

Mr. TOWNS. Well, what—let me put it this way, then: what in particular makes this new design more secure than the one it is replacing? Let me try you that way.

Mr. PATRICK. Sure. I believe one of the things that I refer to in that circumstance is the RFID and the ability to point to a data base to pull up an actual record. My understanding is, today, there is not the ability, or very seldom is there the ability to go back to a data base to confirm the identity of the user. This would allow the border crossing card holder to be vetted via the RFID pointer number to the data base.

Mr. TOWNS. Mr. Alsbrooks, let me get your opinion on this as well. What advantage did the older design have over this design?

Mr. ALSBROOKS. Over the current one?

Mr. TOWNS. Yes.

Mr. ALSBROOKS. First of all, the optical stripe did contain the biometric and biographic information. It was written to that card 10 times. I have one of the old cards here. The images were etched into the stripe. It could be used for visual authentication, but the card can also be used for retrieval of data. It has two biometric templates usually of the forefingers and it has one full blown WSQ fingerprint. The weakness of the old card, in my opinion, was the dye sublimation. It was printed in color and it was a D2T2 process that, as we talked about earlier, with solvents you can remove that and reprint it. What you couldn't do was alter the optical stripe. And that remains to be true. So from the side of the optical stripe, this is far more secure than the current design. The addition of the laser engraved personalization, you know, completes the protection of the card.

Mr. Chairman, when we interrupted for the vote a while ago, I had a little bit left on my testimony. So at your convenience, I would love to finish that.

Mr. TOWNS. I'd be delighted to yield and allow you to continue at this moment.

Mr. ALSBROOKS. OK. Thank you very much. At the time we had broke, we had just talked about the fact that we had successfully removed a real Kinegram from the card intact in a way that it could be reapplied to another card. And then we started—this—that by the way was done with a 60 watt bulb and a kitchen knife.

Today's state-of-the-art laser printing is actually being done utilizing an optical stripe. This technology does constitute a huge obstacle to counterfeiters. The new border crossing cards should continue to include an optical stripe. Only then can the State Department legitimately claim that they are using the most durable, se-

cure and tamper resistant cards available to the American public. Two distinct components of the overt features of the card, common images like portraits or statues that can be easily discerned from the unaided eye yet retain their detail and integrity at about 400 power magnification—the optical stripe is now available in a 24-millimeter width and is uniquely personalized with a larger and much clearer digital photograph and with the biographical data of the card holder. The image is prominently burned into the optical media with a laser into the core of the card. It can be destroyed, but it can never be altered.

These features have been designed in close consultation with forensic and intelligence officers from DHS' forensic document lab and represent an enormous challenge to any level of counterfeiter, including those State sponsored. The border crossing card today contains a fingerprint biometric stored in the optical stripe, which can be validated in a matter of seconds from the card off line. The specification for the new BCC, however, does not include a fingerprint biometric and will instead rely on visual comparison to the digital photograph. Visual comparison of a photo retrieved from the data base by an inspector does not constitute the functional equivalent of a fingerprint biometric verification.

Without question, the optical stripe is the most demonstrably secure overt feature available for secure ID cards. The optical stripe can easily be added to the new cards specified for BCC and pass. If it were, inspectors would then be able to rely on the visual authentication of the document. The digital photo and biographical features on the face of the card would be rendered relevant and unaltered by simply referring to the optical media on the reverse side. It is called a reliable flash pass.

Chairman Towns, Ranking Member Bilbray, let me close with a word of concern. If State and DHS continue on their current path, they will issue pass and BCC cards that are so insecure that they will become the terrorist document of choice. They will not leave home without it.

Thank you for your time. I will be pleased to answer any questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Alsbrooks follows:]

**Testimony of  
William T. Alsbrooks  
Great Bear Solutions Group**

**Before the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, Subcommittee on Government Management, Organization and Procurement**

**Wednesday, June 25, 2008 2:00 p.m.  
Rayburn House Office Building Room 2247**

Chairman Towns, Ranking Member Bilbray, and other distinguished members of the subcommittee – I thank you for the invitation to appear before you today to provide my assessment of the card security features of the new US Department of State B1/B2 Visa Border Crossing Cards.

A quick background: I retired from General Dynamics Information Technology in the fall of 2007 and today I run my own consulting firm, Great Bear Solutions Group. In the interest of full disclosure, I have served as a paid consultant to both OVD Kinegram and Lasercard. For almost 20 years, I was the Vice President in charge of the Credential Technology Group. Since 1995, my group deployed over 40M secure ID cards of all types containing the most sophisticated security features known.

**The Border Crossing Card (BCC)**

Keep in mind that the Department of Homeland Security has stated that RFID infrastructure will be deployed to only 39 Ports of Entry. Even at those sites, there will be times where; readers will fail, card antennas will fail, databases will go down, and power will not be available. BCC cards will also be used for identification not just at the border crossings but also in the interior of the United States where there will be no readers.

Given that, it is important to understand the following:

1. ID cards with national security implications such as the BCC and Passport Cards must provide for reliable face-value visual authentication in the absence of machine readers and specialty card reading tools.
2. Card features that require special readers to check for covert or forensic features such as magnifiers, ultra violet or infra red lights or special lens, are of little to no value to a tier one inspector. If a secure ID card cannot be visually authenticated with an unaided eye it is poorly conceived and easily compromised.
3. A reliable secure “flash pass” that can be visually authenticated with the unaided eye is available today. Unfortunately, the card that I have been asked to assess and that the Department of State intends to deploy is not that card. Deployment of that card will effectively “lower the bar” on ID card security for this generation of cards, which I believe poses a grave threat to our national security.

The most durable, secure and tamper-resistant card available for the American public is the card that has been developed for the new Permanent Resident “Green” Card. This advanced technology card incorporates all of the security features specified for the Border Crossing and Passport Cards – including the RFID chip – however, it is significantly more reliable on face-value inspection because of the inclusion of the latest “state of the art” laser-engraved optical security stripe.

This card is *self-referential* – meaning that the laser engraved photo and name on the front and back of the card can be *referenced* to verify each other. It contains high resolution images which function at a forensic level and also offer unsurpassed visual authentication when using only an unaided eye.

The specifications for the Passport Card and new Border Crossing Cards are the same– just different artwork and optical variable device (OVD).

Let me explain why I believe that the features in the proposed new cards aren’t “good enough” to rely on for a “secure flash passes”:

The new card specifications do include overt, covert and forensic features. However, they rely on security features most commonly associated with currency, such as: security printing, (guilloche, micro line, moiré, and rainbow printing), traceable particulates, scrambled indicia, and optically variable inks. Most of these features require the use of specialized tools or access to lab equipment to validate the card’s authenticity. As a result, these features are frequently simulated in counterfeit currency world-wide.

It is the nature of the secure document business and in the best interest of the American public that the best of breed proprietary single source technology be utilized in secure ID cards so that components of our most valuable national documents are not easily obtained by criminals. Most of the technology that has been specified for the new card is sole-source proprietary technology. The OVD Kinegram was chosen by the State Department and separately sole-sourced. The artwork is done on a proprietary software product. The color-changing inks are single sourced. If scrambled indicia is used – it is a proprietary technology. Any type of traceable particulate or security thread will be proprietary and require proprietary readers. Although we are not talking about paper in this case – it is commonly known that all US currency is printed on CRANE paper. The optical security stripe is a proprietary single source feature. I believe it offers a solid and unique security benefit.

For visual authentication of the new cards - the Department of State has “bet the whole farm” on the security of the laser engraved personalization and the OVD Kinegram.

#### **Laser Engraved Personalization**

Laser engraving is not new technology, it is not unique nor is it difficult to duplicate. It is also not impossible to alter. I have been using laser engravers since we first produced the Canada Permanent Resident Card in 2002. I believe that it is the best choice for this application and it

should be used on these cards. However, it is not a feature that is going to stop an accomplished counterfeiter. Laser engravers are readily available, affordable for low volume counterfeiters, and can be purchased on EBay.

#### **Optical Variable Device**

OVD Kinegram produces an extraordinary optical variable device. It is a unique combination featuring both metalized and transparent materials – it has horizontal and vertical movement – color diffractive light shifting and multiple images. My group has used Kinegrams since 2002 and I recommend that the Kinegram remain on these cards. It is the best of its breed in the world.

“All that glitters is not gold” and sophisticated holograms both authentic and counterfeit are now widely manufactured and readily available world-wide. Technology to produce holographic devices is not closely held. Unfortunately, it is a feature that can be simulated and will not stop an accomplished counterfeiter.

It is important to note that the Kinegram feature is not individual specific – they are visually all alike - once the OVD has been compromised, a simulation can be mass produced.

Also of great concern to me is the fact that the Kinegram can be removed from a real card intact and reapplied to a counterfeit. Even though the current plan is to embed the OVD under the top layer of the card, it can be readily separated using heat and a knife, or any of a number of solvents which can be purchased at a local drug or hardware store. Again, any accomplished counterfeiter will have no problem doing this as soon as he gets his hands on an authentic card.

#### **Optical Security Stripe**

Today’s “state of the art” laser engraving is actually being done utilizing optical stripe security. This technology does constitute a huge obstacle to counterfeiters.

The new Border Crossing Cards should continue to include an optical stripe - only then can the Department legitimately claim to be issuing the most “durable, secure and tamper-resistant cards available to the American public”.

There are two distinct components to the overt features on the new optical cards. First, common images like portraits or statues that can be seen clearly with the naked eye – yet retain their detail and integrity under 400 power magnification.

Second, each optical stripe is now 24mm in width and is uniquely personalized with a larger much clearer digital photograph and with the biographical data of the card holder. The image is permanently burned into the optical media with a laser into the core of the card. It can be destroyed but it cannot be altered.

These features have been designed in close consultation with forensic and intelligence officers from the DHS/ICE Forensic Document Laboratory and represent an enormous challenge to any level of counterfeiter – including those state sponsored.

In accordance with the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996 (IIRIRA), the current BCC contains a fingerprint biometric stored in the optical stripe which can be validated in a matter of seconds. The specification for the new BCC cards, however, does not include a fingerprint biometric and will instead rely on visual comparison to the digital photograph. Visual comparison of a photo retrieved from a data base by an inspector does not constitute the functional equivalent of a fingerprint biometric verification.

Without question, the optical security stripe is the most demonstrably secure overt feature available for secure ID cards. The optical stripe can easily be added to the new cards currently specified for the Border Crossing Card and Passport Cards. If it were - inspectors would then be able to rely on the visual authentication of the document. The digital photo and biographical features on the face of the card would be rendered relevant and unaltered by simply referring to the optical media on the reverse side. My colleagues and I refer to this card as a "self-referential - reliable flash-pass".

Thank you for your time. I will be pleased to answer any questions.



Mr. TOWNS. Thank you very much for your testimony and I understand that—let me just ask this and then I'm going to yield to you after this, ranking member. I understand that this optical stripe technology has been on the current border crossing cards for the last 10 years. And you're recommending that it remain on the new cards?

Mr. ALSBROOKS. Yes, sir.

Mr. TOWNS. Why?

Mr. ALSBROOKS. Well, first of all, it gives unparalleled visual authentication. That optical stripe can be destroyed, but it can never be altered. The images and the data are burned into the card with a 40 milliwatt semiconductor laser by burning pits and the media is actually physically deformed. So you can't go erase it and rewrite it. By combining that with other security features—I'm all in favor of layering security features so that one verifies the other. So if on the face of the card—and I believe you have some samples up there of this. On the face of the card, if I use the laser engraving and I burn that into the polycarbonate into the core of the card and then I put a Kinegram on top of that, which I then burn that into that until I link it so I can see if it has been moved and then—I can then reference the front to the back of the card. And if the photos are the same, then it hasn't been tampered with.

Now, the other thing I would do is I would put that Kinegram on top of the card instead of putting it under the layer. Any time you put it under the layer like this, you can separate it and reuse it and they will never get away from that. But if you put that on top of the card, I know it is an abrasive issue and it is a wear issue and I know why they did this. If you put it on the top of the card and somebody tampers with it, you can detect it.

Mr. TOWNS. Thank you very much and let me yield to the ranking member.

Mr. BILBRAY. Why don't we followup on the wear and tear problem, the breakdown of this technology. That is a legitimate concern?

Mr. ALSBROOKS. Yes, sir.

Mr. BILBRAY. Mr. Patrick, would you like to have a chance to respond?

Mr. PATRICK. The card we provided was asked for by State spec to be a 10-year card. We stand behind that 10-year guarantee.

Mr. BILBRAY. So that is the determining factor? Was just the fact that if somebody—if this is abused, it won't last the 10 years?

Mr. PATRICK. Our understanding from the State Department was they were concerned with people putting it in their shoe, ashtrays, that they wouldn't take care of it. They had a 5-year option and a 10-year option. They chose the 10-year option and we stand behind that. And that is how our contract is.

Mr. BILBRAY. If there was a 5-year option, would the strips still not qualify under your—

Mr. PATRICK. I'm sorry. Could you repeat the question?

Mr. BILBRAY. If it was a 5-year option, would that change your perception of the use of the stripe?

Mr. PATRICK. No.

Mr. BILBRAY. Mostly because you can't guarantee it against abuse?

Mr. PATRICK. Mostly.

Mr. BILBRAY. The chip is guaranteed—you're comfortable the chip is guaranteed for 10 years?

Mr. PATRICK. The entire card, the full construction, the chip, the antenna, the polycarbonate, if it does not perform, we stand behind it.

Mr. BILBRAY. And there is no concern of the chip at all for 10 years?

Mr. PATRICK. The test that was run by the State Department at Sandia labs, plus our independent testing, tells us that we are on solid ground with the 10-year guarantee.

Mr. BILBRAY. OK. You understand my concern or our concern with the fact that maybe the specs gave precedence to how long the card was guaranteed and rather than how secure the card being first priority. I mean, to equate it again to the bulletproof vest, the best bulletproof vests have—expire much quicker than older bulletproof vests do. But you were going to the specs and that is a 10-year spec?

Mr. PATRICK. Yes.

Mr. BILBRAY. How about the replacement rate on the existing BCCs?

Mr. ALSBROOKS. Well, as I said earlier, I retired from General Dynamic, but I was responsible for that contract for over 10 years. We never were asked to replace a single card.

Mr. BILBRAY. And how long was that card?

Mr. ALSBROOKS. It was guaranteed for 10 years. Certainly there were cards that were abused, but we never found a card that had four corners that we could not read. And I have spent a lot of time on the border just south of San Diego and if the card had four corners, it would read and we always said that if it was broken we would replace it, and we were never asked to replace a single card.

Mr. BILBRAY. Just for your record, the incorporated city of San Diego goes all the way to the border.

Mr. ALSBROOKS. Yes, sir.

Mr. BILBRAY. San Ysidro is a community of San Diego.

Mr. ALSBROOKS. Yes, sir.

Mr. BILBRAY. We are still arguing over that occupation, but that is another issue.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. TOWNS. Thank you. Let me thank all of you for your testimony. We really appreciate your time and, of course, we value the information that you have shared with us as well. So I would like to at this time, if there is no further question, to—

Mr. BILBRAY. Let me just say—if I can close just with a statement that was given to us from Guantanamo, and that is Abu Zubaydah is actually quoted in one of those interrogations as the al Qaeda's document specialist. And he stated—and I like the way he uses the English language. It is the way I learned it, too, but we'll talk about "we start work in fake passports. I was famous. I was me, myself, a big market for fake passports. 'And this is really the telling statement.' I can send anybody to any place. It is easy. So this is my work."

Let us just hope, you know, we don't hear testimony like that from the next group of al Qaedas that we capture.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.  
Mr. TOWNS. Thank you very much and, without objection, on that  
note the committee stands adjourned.  
[Whereupon, at 4:30 p.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]

