



## **IMMIGRATION ALERT!**

### **Client Alert:**

### **US-VISIT**



By December 31, 2003, a new entry and exit control system will be implemented at many airports and seaports by the Department of Homeland Security. The new program, called U.S. Visitor and Immigrant Status Indication Technology system ("US-VISIT"), is a revamped entry-exit system aimed at improving screening procedures, tracking visitors in the U.S., and monitoring immigration status violations.

The development and implementation of an automated entry and exit control system was initially mandated by the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996 ("IIRAIRA"). Legislation passed subsequent to the terrorist acts of September 11, 2001, such as the USA Patriot Act and the Enhanced Border Security Act, have placed the program on a fast track.

#### **I. New Entry Procedures**

In addition to current entry procedures, international travelers with a non-immigrant visa will be subject to an inkless fingerprint scan of the index finger of each hand as well as a digital photograph. This biographic and fingerprint data will be used to confirm the identity of the visitor and will be compared against "watch lists" in an effort to reduce fraud, identity theft, and the entry of terrorists and criminals into the U.S. The government estimates that the new procedures will not cause significant delays for foreign travelers entering the U.S.

## II. New Exit Procedures

Exit procedures at airports and seaports will be phased in during early 2004. At the international departure areas, visitors will be asked to scan their travel documents and repeat the fingerprinting process at an automated self-service departure kiosk. The exit confirmation will be utilized to verify compliance with the terms of a visitor's stay and to monitor eligibility for future visits.

## III. Program Implementation

The Enhanced Border Security Act requires the US-VISIT system to be implemented:

- at air and seaports by December 31, 2003
- at the 50 most highly trafficked land ports of entry (POES) by December 31, 2004, and
- at all POES by December 31, 2005.

The Department of Homeland Security estimates that the enhanced screening process will be implemented at 115 airports and 14 seaports by early 2004. The US-VISIT program received \$380 million in funding for fiscal year 2003 and has been appropriated \$330 million for FY 2004.

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