

**TESTIMONY OF  
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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE**

**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON BORDER, MARITIME AND GLOBAL  
TERRORISM**

***“MOVING BEYOND THE FIRST FIVE YEARS: ENSURING  
SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION OF THE WESTERN HEMISPHERE  
TRAVEL INITIATIVE”***

**Wednesday, April 16, 2008  
2:00 p.m., 311 Cannon Building**

Chairwoman Sanchez, Ranking Member Souder, Distinguished Members,

Thank you for this opportunity to discuss the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative (WHTI) and the role of the State Department in providing American citizens with reliable, secure passports and soon passport cards so that American citizens can comply with the new travel document requirements under WHTI.

In passing the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004, Congress required the Departments of Homeland Security and State to develop and implement a plan to require **all** travelers, U.S. citizens and foreign nationals alike, to present a passport or other secure document to denote identity and citizenship when entering the United States. The goal of the program is to strengthen border security and facilitate entry into the United States for U.S. citizens and legitimate foreign travelers.

To meet this mandate, the State Department is adjudicating and issuing passports to eligible U.S. citizens in record numbers; we have also begun to accept passport card applications and will begin issuing the cards in June. Our workload indicates that Americans are aware of the new document requirements under WHTI and are coming into compliance with them. In FY 2007, the Department issued 18.4 million passports — a 50 percent increase over FY 2006 and an 80 percent increase over FY 2005. Thus far in FY 2008, there is a seven percent increase in passport demand over the same time period in FY 2007. We are meeting this demand by processing routine

passport applications well within our four week service standards for routine applications and two weeks for expedited applications.

### **Increasing Passport Production Capacity**

Today's record-breaking demand is not an anomaly. Implementation of WHTI has created a permanent increase in passport demand, and we believe it will continue to grow. More than 88 million Americans currently have passports – about 28 percent of all citizens. Our initial workload projections for FY 2008 indicated demand for U.S. passports could reach as high as 26-29 million in 2008, 30 million in FY 2009, 36 million in FY 2010. Although we continue to prepare for that possibility, our current workload indicates that FY 2008 demand may be more in the range of 20 - 21 million passports. We attribute this decline to the recent congressional action mandating implementation of the final phase of the land and sea rule of WHTI to no earlier than June 1, 2009. This legislation passed subsequent to our demand study, and we fully expect demand to increase as we approach the June 1, 2009 implementation date.

The Department is implementing a long-term strategy to provide the staffing levels and infrastructure necessary to meet the increased passport demand generated by WHTI. To that end, the Department has hired hundreds of additional passport adjudicators and support staff and continues to recruit aggressively. The Department has also established a reserve corps of passport adjudicators to supplement our full-time Passport Services staff, providing the ability to react quickly to demand surges.

To increase production capacity, we opened a mega-processing center in March 2007 in Hot Springs, Arkansas. The Arkansas Processing Center (APC) differs from our other passport centers in that it focuses solely on printing and mailing passports. It will have the capacity to produce 10 million travel documents per year. The centralization of passport printing and mailing frees up space and personnel at our existing passport agencies to focus on the critical areas of customer service and adjudication, and to process more passport applications. Using APC as a model, we expect to open a second printing and mailing facility in Tucson later this month. This facility, like the one in Arkansas, will have the capacity to produce over 10 million travel documents per year.

### **Expanding Passport Acceptance Facilities**

One of the key objectives of the Department is to ensure that passport services are provided in a secure, efficient and courteous manner. At the same time, we need to make our application process as convenient as possible for citizens. The most convenient and least expensive way to apply for a passport is at a passport acceptance facility or by mail for adult renewals. A full 90 percent of our passport applications are submitted via an acceptance agency or mailed directly to us. We have significantly expanded our network of passport acceptance agents in the last several years. Currently, there are more than 9,400 sites at post offices, clerks of court and other government offices nationwide where citizens can apply for a passport.

We have heard the concern of border residents, and are aggressively recruiting acceptance facilities along the northern and southern border regions. Since the Administration announced WHTI to the public in April 2005, the Department has increased its network of acceptance facilities by more than 2,400 facilities, many of which are located along the borders.

There are currently 301 acceptance facilities located within 25 miles of the U.S.-Canada border and 128 acceptance facilities located within 25 miles of the U.S. Mexico border. In fact, since the end of calendar year 2006, we increased the total number of facilities within 25 miles of the Northern border by 5 percent and the total number of facilities within 25 miles of the Southern border by 15 percent.

Our largest acceptance partner, the United States Postal Service (USPS) has held successful passport acceptance events in several border regions around the country. These "Passport Fairs" help meet high customer demand for passports in underserved areas. The USPS plans more of these passport acceptance events in the future, leading up to the June 1, 2009 implementation date.

We are continuing our recruitment efforts in the southern and northern border regions and continue to work with our acceptance agent partners to make the passport application process easily accessible to all Americans.

### **Passport Agencies**

In addition to our 18 passport facilities, the Department is also opening three new Passport Agencies in Detroit, Dallas and Minneapolis in 2008 to serve border communities readying themselves for WHTI land and sea rule

requirements. These agencies will provide personal, direct passport services to customers. Unlike our regional passport agencies and centers, these new agencies are primarily counter agencies designed to meet the urgent travel needs of citizens. These agencies will have the capability of serving 650 customers per day, issuing passport books and cards on-site to qualifying applicants.

The Department looked at several criteria to determine the location of these new passport agencies, including location, distance from an existing passport agency/center, volume of current passport applicants, service and volume of international and domestic departures, and an upward trend in population growth.

Along the northern border, we are expanding our agencies in Seattle and Chicago, and are doubling the size and adjudicative capacity of the National Passport Center in Portsmouth, New Hampshire. Along the southern border, we are expanding our facilities in Houston, Miami, and New Orleans.

### **Passport Card**

In response to the expressed desire for a more portable and less expensive document than the traditional passport book on the part of American citizens who live in border communities, we will begin issuing a wallet-sized passport card in June with full production beginning in July. The passport card will facilitate entry and expedite document processing at U.S. land and sea ports-of-entry when arriving from Canada, Mexico, the Caribbean region and Bermuda. The card may not be used to travel by air. It will otherwise carry the rights and privileges of the U.S. passport book and will be adjudicated to the exact same standards. The passport card is designed for the specific needs of border resident communities and is not a globally interoperable travel document as is the traditional passport book.

The card will have the same validity period as a passport book: 10 years for an adult, five years for children 15 and younger. For adults who already have a passport book, they may apply for the card as a passport renewal and pay only \$20. First-time applicants pay \$45 for adult cards and \$35 for children.

To meet the operational needs of Customs and Border Protection (CBP) and to facilitate document processing at U.S. ports-of-entry, the Department of Homeland Security selected vicinity-read radio frequency identification technology (RFID) for use in the passport card as well as their Trusted Traveler Card program and for use in the Enhanced Driver's License (EDL). The passport card will therefore contain a vicinity-read (RFID) chip which will link the card to a stored record in a secure DHS database. There will be no identifying information on the RFID chip; only a number will be read at a distance by an authorized CBP reader mounted alongside the traffic lane at ports of entry. The reader will automatically retrieve the personal data from the secure database and populate the officers' screens as the vehicle approaches. To mitigate the risk of tracking, the card will be issued with a protective "attenuation" sleeve to prevent unauthorized reading of the chip.

This card is the result of an inter-agency effort to produce for the American public the most durable, secure and tamper-resistant card possible, using state of the art laser engraving and security features. To ensure the durability for the ten-year validity period, we have chosen to make the card of a durable polycarbonate composite material rather than the standard plastic used for ID and credit cards. The Department has benefited from the collaborative efforts of the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST), Sandia National Labs, the DHS Forensics Document Lab (FDL), and, of course, colleagues at CBP. To ensure the durability and integrity of the card, the Department subjected the test cards to a full battery of durability and chemical testing at Sandia National Labs in accordance with guidance from NIST. In consultation with the DHS/FDL, the card is designed with multiple layers of overt, covert and forensic security features to guard against tampering and counterfeiting and to provide easy visual verification to CBP officers.

To encourage Americans to apply for passports and cards and to level demand during our traditional peak season, we began accepting applications for the passport card on February 1, 2008. Given the volume of applications to date, particularly from the southern border states, there is clearly a demand for the card. As of April 9, the Department has received more than 143,000 applications for the card. These applications have been adjudicated and are awaiting production. As noted above, the Department expects to begin issuing these cards in June and to be in full production by July.

### **Public Outreach**

Public outreach is the key to successful implementation of WHTI. The Department awarded a contract to a marketing firm on March 3 to help inform Americans about WHTI requirements, the new passport card, and the differences between the card and the traditional book, and to encourage them to apply for their documents early — well in advance of their planned trips and certainly well in advance of June 1, 2009.

As we move toward full WHTI implementation, the Department of State, working with our colleagues at DHS, will continue public education efforts which will include greater advertising with local media in areas that specifically target those persons who use the land borders. We will also continue sponsoring information sessions with business associations and civil organizations.

The frontline of our outreach efforts will be the more than 10,000 passport acceptance agents in every corner of the United States, especially along our border, who will continue to reach out to their customers and neighbors with passport fairs, press releases, and visits to their post offices, town halls and libraries.

### **Conclusion**

We understand that our national security is dependent on our economic well being and that of our neighbors to the north and south. We also understand that the economic well being of the border communities depends on the free flow of people and goods.

As we have stated since we announced WHTI three years ago this month, we are committed to implementing the WHTI in a rational and intelligent manner, one that facilitates trade, travel and tourism while enhancing our national security.

Thank you and I look forward to your questions.