

Comprehensive Strategy for Overstay Enforcement and Deterrence

March 18, 2020 Fiscal Year 2017 Report to Congress



Message from the Office of the Under Secretary for Management

March 18, 2020

I am pleased to present the following report, "Comprehensive Strategy for Overstay Enforcement and Deterrence," which has been prepared by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE).

The report has been compiled pursuant to a provision in Senate Report 114-264 that accompanies the Fiscal Year (FY) 2017 Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Appropriations Act (P.L. 115-31). DHS has generated this report to provide information on initiatives associated with the identification, enforcement, and deterrence of visa overstays.



This report is being provided to the following Members of Congress:

The Honorable Lucille Roybal-Allard Chairwoman, House Appropriations Subcommittee on Homeland Security

The Honorable Chuck Fleischmann Ranking Member, House Appropriations Subcommittee on Homeland Security

The Honorable Shelley Moore Capito Chairman, Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Homeland Security

The Honorable Jon Tester Ranking Member, Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Homeland Security

Inquiries relating to this report may be directed to me at (202) 447-3400.

Sincerely,

R. D. Alles

Deputy Under Secretary for Management

Executive Summary

This report outlines DHS's comprehensive strategy for overstay enforcement and deterrence, to include information on existing operations and planned improvements.

Each year, millions of nonimmigrants are admitted lawfully to the United States for an authorized period of time. The authorized period can be a fixed period, or can be based on completion of a certain activity, such as a student seeking a college degree or technical/practical training. A nonimmigrant becomes an "overstay" when he or she remains in the United States beyond his or her authorized period of admission. According to prior DHS reports, approximately 1 percent of all visa holders have overstayed their admission annually. Federal law establishes consequences for nonimmigrants who overstay their authorized periods of admission.¹

DHS conducts its overstay enforcement efforts using a risk-based prioritization framework focused on upholding national security and public safety. DHS's overstay enforcement efforts are aligned along three general categories: identification initiatives, enforcement actions, and deterrence efforts. ICE is the lead DHS Component responsible for overstay enforcement within the United States. ICE holds primary responsibility for "Suspected In-Country Overstay" lead development, investigations, apprehensions, and removals. Other DHS Components, including U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) and U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), as well as interagency partners, play critical roles in addressing visa overstay violations.

The overstay identification process collates arrival, departure, and immigration information in order to generate a complete travel history for individuals who traveled, and subsequently were admitted, to the United States. It encompasses the creation of automated overstay leads, batch vetting against DHS component databases, and the prioritization and development of investigative leads that incorporate relevant law enforcement and national security information from various U.S. Government and public sources. To initiate the process, CBP generates daily lists of automated leads, referring possible "Out-of-Country" overstay leads to offices within CBP, and "Suspected In-Country" overstays to ICE.

Overstay identification efforts are supported by various initiatives to address national security and public safety vulnerabilities within the overstay population. In FY 2017, these initiatives included, *inter alia*, the Domestic Mantis program, the Visa Lifecycle Program, a partnership with the National Counterterrorism Center, and visa-specific initiatives.

In FY 2017, ICE's vetting and investigative efforts narrowed down more than 1.4 million suspected In-Country Overstay leads. Of these, 348,934 (23.8 percent) were found to have departed the country; 21,071 (1.4 percent) had changed their immigration status lawfully; and 263,452 (18 percent) were determined viable for more in-depth vetting, investigation, and possible law enforcement action by ICE Homeland Security Investigations (HSI). The

-

¹ Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) §§ 212(a)(9)(B); 237(a)(1)(C)(i); 222(g).

remaining 832,751 (56.8 percent) leads did not meet the criteria for an HSI-led investigation, and were sent to ICE Enforcement and Removal Operations for further review and possible action.

As a result of the aforementioned identification processes, DHS Components can leverage various authorities against overstay violations. ICE serves as the lead Component executing overstay enforcement actions, including the initiation of removal proceedings, on violators within the United States.

- In FY 2017, ICE HSI's Counterterrorism and Criminal Exploitation Unit sent 7,353 investigative leads to HSI field offices targeting overstay leads that could pose a national security or public safety concern.
- CBP is responsible for enforcement activities for overstay violators who since have departed the United States. For validated Out-of-Country Overstay Violations, CBP's Arrival and Departure Information System (ADIS) Vetting Unit (AVU) creates TECS records to inform officers at the U.S. Department of State (DOS), USCIS, CBP, and other entities of the overstay violation. This may result in CBP no longer recognizing a nonimmigrant visa as valid, and/or may result in a 3- or 10-year bar to a subsequent admission. To date, the work of the AVU has resulted in more than 13,000 actions taken of this kind.
- Finally, USCIS leverages delegated authority² to issue Form I-862, "Notice to Appear" (NTA), when it finds that a person is not eligible for the benefit sought and is removable for any reason.³ USCIS has authority to issue NTAs to individuals who are not in a period of authorized stay upon unfavorable adjudication of their applications/petitions. Alternatively, USCIS creates a referral to ICE for other cases, where a subject is not yet amenable to removal proceedings at the time of decision or where the subject's status is due to expire at some future date. If a nonimmigrant is served an NTA by any of the DHS immigration Components, he or she will be accused of violating U.S. immigration laws and must appear before an immigration judge. If found to be in violation of immigration laws, he or she will be found removable from the United States and may be removed.

As part of its overstay enforcement efforts, ICE works with key interagency partners, including:

- the International Criminal Police Organization, in search of a fugitive or individual wanted for serious crimes:
- the U.S. Department of Defense, to identify instances in which highly trained military students become absent without leave;
- the Federal Bureau of Investigation, in support of the Joint Terrorism Task Force to identify overstays with counterterrorism concerns; and
- DOS, in support of the Visa Revocation Program to identify, locate, and remove individuals whose visas were revoked yet who remain in the country.

² INA §§ 103(a), 239; 8 CFR §§ 2.1, 239.1

³ Delegation by the Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security to the Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services, Delegation Number 0150.1; Paragraph 2(N).

DHS also has instituted various initiatives to deter and otherwise prevent overstay violations. This occurs through direct notifications to nonimmigrants as well as through outreach and education programs. As part of these efforts, DHS currently is requiring Visa Waiver Program (VWP) countries with an overstay rate equal to or exceeding 2 percent to implement a public awareness campaign intended to educate their nationals on the importance of abiding by the terms of their admission into the United States. Additionally, CBP initiated a notification process for VWP overstays in FY 2017 and also has begun sending out notifications for VWP travelers 10 days in advance of the end date of their period of authorized admission.

Within ICE, Project Campus Sentinel builds a partnership between HSI special agents and Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP)-certified institutions to detect and combat student visa exploitation proactively and to address inherent national security vulnerabilities posed by certain foreign students and school officials. SEVP also leverages numerous outreach initiatives to review and educate both certified schools and nonimmigrant students to ensure compliance with all relevant immigration laws and to prevent potential visa status violations.

Additionally, DHS is supplementing its ability to identify and locate visa violators by improving and modernizing its information technology systems. CBP's ADIS modernization will enhance the accuracy of its algorithms and will reduce false overstay leads. Simultaneously, ICE is modernizing the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System to become a person-centric database and to permit students to update their records for accuracy.

Also, DHS is reviewing the existing regulations on "duration of status" (D/S), a term used for the period of time that foreign nationals are admitted for a specific program or activity, which may be variable, instead of for a set timeframe. The authorized period ends when the foreign national has accomplished the purpose of his or her travel, plus any authorized grace period, or no longer is engaged in authorized activities pertaining to that purpose. The failure to provide certain categories of nonimmigrants with specific dates for their authorized periods of stay can cause confusion over how long they may remain lawfully in the United States and has complicated the efforts to reduce overstay rates and to enforce our immigration laws effectively. As a result, DHS is evaluating the D/S framework for certain nonimmigrant programs.

DHS continues to improve its efforts to collect, analyze, and report information affecting the overstay enforcement mission. By enhancing current capabilities and/or by developing new methods, DHS is better equipped to track visa overstays accurately for enforcement action and otherwise to deter violations. This report details several steps that DHS has taken to expand its collaboration with interagency partners in its efforts to locate and remove overstay violators, as well as to improve its capabilities to communicate entry/exit information to prioritize leads and to prevent nonimmigrant visa holders from violating their status.



FY 2017 Comprehensive Strategy for Overstay Enforcement and Deterrence

Table of Contents

I.	Legislative Language	1
II.	Background	2
III.	Existing Operations	5
	C. Deterrence, Outreach, and Prevention	
IV.	Ongoing Enhancements and Improvements A. Information Technology Modernization Efforts B. Bolstering Enforcement and Deterrence Initiatives	14
V.	Admission Under Duration of Status	16
VI.	Conclusion	18
App	endix – Abbreviations	19

I. Legislative Language

This document responds to language in Senate Report 114-264 that accompanies the Fiscal Year (FY) 2017 Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Appropriations Act (P.L. 115-31). Senate Report 114-264 states:

Moreover, the Committee also continues \$10,000,000 in funding dedicated to ICE enforcement efforts related to visa overstays. In addition, the Department shall submit a report outlining its comprehensive strategy for overstay enforcement and deterrence not later than 180 days after the date of enactment of this act. The report shall detail the steps being taken to identify aliens who have overstayed their visas, including those necessary to improve the capabilities to report such information; notify aliens of their required departure dates in advance; track such overstays for enforcement action; refuse or revoke current and future visas and travel authorization; and otherwise deter violations or take enforcement action. The report shall also outline the conditions under which an alien is admitted to the United States for "duration of status" and assess changes to such admission, since the required departure requirement is vague and complicates enforcement.

II. Background

An "overstay" is a nonimmigrant who is lawfully admitted to the United States for an authorized period but has stayed in the United States beyond his or her lawful admission period. Nonimmigrants admitted for "duration of status" (D/S) who fail to maintain their status also may be considered overstays. D/S is a term used for the period of time that foreign nationals are admitted for a specific program or activity, which may be variable, instead of for a set timeframe. The authorized admission period ends when the foreign national has accomplished the purpose for which he or she was admitted or no longer is engaged in authorized activities pertaining to that purpose. For example, a student who enters the United States for a program that runs for 4 years must leave when the program is completed, or go on to pursue another program of study. DHS identifies two types of overstays: 1) Individuals for whom no departure has been recorded (i.e., Suspected In-Country Overstays), and 2) Individuals whose departure was recorded after their lawful period of admission expired (i.e., out-of-country overstays). In FYs 2015, 2016, and 2017, the DHS Entry/Exit Overstay Report indicated that just more than 1 percent of all nonimmigrants overstayed their admission.

DHS conducts its overstay enforcement and deterrence efforts using a risk-based prioritization framework, which is focused on national security and public safety. The mission is executed through an integrated partnership among DHS Components, in collaboration with other U.S. Government agencies. The existing overstay enforcement model was built on the findings of *The 9/11 Commission Report* and the 9/11 Commission staff report, which noted that two of the 19 hijackers implicated in the September 11th attacks were visa overstays,⁴ and recommended that the government ensure that all visitors to the United States were tracked upon entry and exit.⁵ Other terrorism-related incidents, upon investigation, also have been linked to, or perpetrated by, nonimmigrant overstays. Consequently, it is critical for DHS to prioritize its enforcement and deterrence efforts to target those overstays who pose the highest risk to national security and public safety.

DHS's overstay efforts are aligned along the following general parameters:

• **Identification:** Involves the use of information technology, data analysis, and investigative programs to develop and report on potential leads of individuals who have violated the terms and conditions of their nonimmigrant visa status. This includes initiatives to prioritize the identification of those who support terrorism, violent extremism, and acts of violence toward any group or class of people within the United States, or who present a risk of causing harm subsequent to their entry.

⁴ National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States, *9/11 and Terrorist Travel: Staff Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States*, Washington, D.C., National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States, 2004, p. 389.

⁵ National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States, *The 9/11 Commission Report: Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States*, Washington, D.C., National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States, 2004, pp. 134, 139.

- **Enforcement:** Encompasses law enforcement actions to locate and verify removability of a possible overstay violator, to investigate possible national security or public safety concerns, and to apply penalties where applicable.
- **Deterrence:** Incorporates initiatives to prevent, educate, and notify foreign visitors of the possibility of violating their nonimmigrant visa status. This also includes proactive efforts with institutional sponsors (e.g., schools accepting nonimmigrant students), to ensure that nonimmigrants are informed of the terms and requirements of their admission to the United States.

Within DHS, the primary operational Components engaged in the overstay enforcement mission include U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP), and U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). These entities engage and consult with various DHS Headquarters offices on policy, privacy, legal, and acquisition-related issues, as required.

- ICE: Serves as the lead on immigration enforcement operations within the United States, and is responsible for nonimmigrant identification, prioritization, and enforcement actions on foreign nationals who have overstayed their period of admission or otherwise have violated the terms of their admission and are believed to be in the United States. ICE conducts in-depth analyses, locates targets, and initiates field investigations by referring high-priority information to Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) special agents or to Enforcement and Removal Operations (ERO) officers nationwide. ICE continuously reviews certain in-status nonimmigrants to identify any possible emerging national security-related concerns, and partners with ICE HSI attachés and other government agencies to investigate or address any possible transnational threats.
- **CBP:** Collects biographic and biometric information to document arrival and departure information on individuals arriving to the United States at ports of entry. CBP officers also determine admissibility into the United States and determine the authorized period of admission (also known as an "admit until date"), by which time the individual must leave the country. CBP serves as the lead Component for enforcement activities related to overstay violators who since have departed the United States (also referred to as out-of-country overstays). When an overstay is confirmed, CBP creates a "lookout" based on the specific type of violation.
- USCIS: Administers the Nation's lawful immigration system, which includes processing and adjudicating requests for immigration benefits. Among other things, USCIS determines whether applicants and beneficiaries of certain immigration benefit requests are inadmissible based on prior accrual of unlawful presence. USCIS also updates its Computer Linked Application Immigration Management System 3 (CLAIMS3) to indicate nonimmigrant status violations during the adjudication of certain applications and petitions. Furthermore, USCIS issues a Form I-862, Notice to Appear (NTA), under certain conditions after denying a subject's application or petition and when the subject is removable. USCIS refers certain cases to ICE and

shares information with ICE for investigation regarding subjects who may have overstayed their nonimmigrant admission.

III. Existing Operations

A. Overstay Identification

The overstay identification process is conducted utilizing arrival, departure, and immigration information, which is consolidated to generate a complete travel history for individuals who traveled and were admitted to the United States. It also incorporates relevant law enforcement and national security information from various U.S. Government and public sources to vet and prioritize overstay leads for enforcement action.

To initiate the overstay identification process, CBP collects biographic and biometric data on nonimmigrants at U.S. ports of entry. CBP also collects this information from passenger manifests for arrivals to and departures from the United States via commercial sea and air carriers, private aircraft, and data received from Canada on third-country nationals entering Canada from the United States at land ports of entry. CBP, through its Arrival and Departure Information System (ADIS), matches the departure data against arrival data to determine who has complied with the terms of admission and who possibly may have overstayed their nonimmigrant stay. This system also receives other DHS data relevant to whether a person is present lawfully, and consolidates border-crossing information, immigration status and extension updates, foreign student and exchange visitor updates, and biometric-related identifiers. These data are used to create a person-centric consolidated travel and immigration history, which then is used to generate an initial determination on overstay status.

The aforementioned system-generated leads are prioritized and batch-vetted against CBP's Automated Targeting System-Passenger, and USCIS' CLAIMS3, reducing the overall list by identifying persons who have departed the United States or have changed their status to another nonimmigrant category, or who have become lawful permanent residents. CBP subsequently disseminates a daily list of Suspected In-Country overstays to ICE and the list of out-of-country overstays to the CBP ADIS Vetting Unit (AVU) for further vetting.

Within ICE, the HSI Counterterrorism and Criminal Exploitation Unit (CTCEU) oversees the national program dedicated to overstay enforcement, and is the first point of intake for overstay leads from CBP's ADIS platform. On average, CTCEU analyzes data on more than 1 million potential visa status violators each year from various DHS databases, including CBP's ADIS and HSI's Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS),⁶ as well as from other investigative databases. Upon receiving the system-generated leads, CTCEU conducts both batch and manual vetting against government databases, open source analysis, and public indices. The information and vetting process helps to identify nonimmigrants who entered the United States through an established immigration entry process and who may have failed to comply with immigration statutes and regulations. This vetting process also helps to determine if an individual who overstayed his or her authorized period subsequently had departed the

5

⁶ SEVIS is a web-based system for maintaining information on international nonimmigrant students and exchange visitors in the United States.

United States, changed to a different lawful status or adjusted to lawful permanent residence, or would be appropriate for enforcement action.

To manage investigative resources better, CTCEU relies on a prioritization framework for these leads established in consultation with interagency partners within the national intelligence and federal law enforcement communities. CTCEU prioritizes rapid identification and enforcement toward overstay violators who may pose a national security and/or public safety concern. As part of its overstay enforcement mission, CTCEU proactively scrutinizes known or suspected terrorists and their associates, identifies terrorists and criminal enterprises, and prevents terrorists and other criminals from exploiting the Nation's immigration system.

Nonimmigrant visa violators who do not meet CTCEU's criteria for investigative leads are identified and referred to the ICE ERO National Criminal Analysis and Targeting Center, which works in close coordination with CTCEU on additional vetting and lead development. When appropriate, leads are forwarded to the ERO field office with jurisdiction for enforcement action.

Throughout FY 2017, CTCEU reviewed more than 1.4 million potential overstay leads, of which 348,934 (23.8 percent) were found to have departed the country; 21,071 (1.4 percent) had adjusted their immigration status, were granted asylum, changed nonimmigrant status, extended nonimmigrant status, or otherwise were deemed to be legally present within the United States; and 263,452 (18 percent) were determined viable for more in-depth vetting and possible law enforcement action by HSI. Of the 1.4 million potential overstay leads, 832,751 (56.8 percent) of the leads did not meet CTCEU's criteria for HSI-led investigation and were sent to ERO for further review and possible action.

As part of the identification process, DHS Components have developed various initiatives to address national security and public safety vulnerabilities within the overstay population. The following outlines key initiatives in place in FY 2017:

- Partnership between ICE National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC): In January 2012, CTCEU initiated the use of NCTC resources to screen overstay leads against Intelligence Community holdings to identify any potential matches for derogatory information. CTCEU also developed the Recurrent Student Vetting Program, a program specifically designed to screen foreign students, who were admitted lawfully to the United States, against known derogatory information. As part of both efforts, CTCEU batch-vets SEVIS and ADIS datasets against the terrorism-related Intelligence Community holdings at the NCTC, and thus leverages mature entity-resolution capabilities to return detailed findings, including any exact matches to the Terrorist Identities DataMart Environment. All matches are validated manually by an analyst for identity confirmation, and deconflicted with other U.S. Government agencies.
- **CTCEU Domestic Mantis Program:** In response to a U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) Assessment, ⁷ CTCEU developed the Domestic Mantis Program to address potential vulnerabilities when nonimmigrant students enter the United States to study in a

⁷ U.S. GAO, Nonproliferation Actions Needed to Improve Screening of Foreign Citizens Who May Pose Risk of Diversion of Sensitive Technologies, LES//GAO-08-103SU, Washington, D.C., November 2007.

6

nonsensitive field of study and subsequently transfer to a sensitive field of study. The program is intended to identify individuals who may pose a risk related to the diversion of sensitive technology, materials, or information through activities such as graduate-level studies, teaching, conducting research, training or employment, or engaging in commercial transactions. CTCEU identifies foreign students in the United States who have transferred to a sensitive field of study and who are citizens of countries that pose counterintelligence concerns. The data then are vetted against Intelligence Community holdings to identify any additional derogatory information, and subsequently are deconflicted with any ongoing law enforcement investigations.

• Visa Lifecycle Program: In 2016, ICE HSI developed the Visa Lifecycle Program to integrate vetting processes more fully from the time a nonimmigrant files a visa application to the time he or she departs from the United States, or until he or she is identified as an overstay or otherwise fails to comply with his or her terms of admission (i.e., becomes "out-of-status"). The initiative focuses on nonimmigrants seeking business or tourist (i.e., B-1 or B-2) or student (i.e., F, J, and M) visas from select U.S. Consulates and Embassies. Working in tandem, CTCEU and HSI's Visa Security Program (VSP) analysts vet information on these visa applicants and perform vetting throughout the lifecycle of the visa's validity for those visas that were approved and issued.

For visas that have been issued, if CTCEU uncovers derogatory information through batch vetting, CTCEU analysts will review the lead manually. If the individual has not entered the United States yet, CTCEU will place a record in the Integrated Case Management System to identify the individual for other government partners (such as CBP); place the individual on the appropriate watch list if applicable; notify the appropriate HSI attaché office; and inform the U.S. Department of State (DOS) of the derogatory information so that DOS may revoke the visa, if deemed appropriate. If the individual has entered the United States, CTCEU analysts will initiate a collateral investigative request, which will be forwarded to the appropriate HSI field office for further investigation. The Visa Lifecycle Program also allows CTCEU to monitor, vet, and identify continuously any derogatory information that may arise during a nonimmigrant's authorized period of admission, or until such person violates his or her visa status. In instances where visa violations are identified (e.g., unlawfully working or not maintaining an active student status), appropriate enforcement actions will be initiated.

• CTCEU Open Source Analysis: CTCEU created the Open Source Team (OST) in 2014 to capture and analyze an expanding share of unclassified information available through various open sources. CTCEU uses publicly available information, consistent with the privacy settings that the applicant has set for those platforms and in accordance with DHS and ICE policies. OST utilizes open source information to expand upon the various government and law enforcement databases currently used during investigations of nonimmigrant visa violators. CTCEU uses open source research techniques to resolve cold cases by determining valid locations for individuals not previously located. CTCEU has expanded its open source capabilities to various other initiatives, including Domestic Mantis and the Visa Lifecycle Program, to identify derogatory information related to national security or public safety concerns.

• **CBP Out-of-Country Overstay Violator Identification:** In June 2016, CBP established an operation unit to review and vet out-of-country overstays. CBP's AVU serves as the point of intake for the automated out-of-country overstay leads, and manually vets each lead to determine the types of visa status violations, or violation of Visa Waiver Program (VWP) requirements. Analysts ensure that the traveler's person-centric identity is correct in both ADIS and the Automated Biometric Identification System. Once the identity has been validated, the analyst queries multiple information systems containing travel and immigration data. These exhaustive searches are designed to find any relevant data not present in ADIS to ensure high confidence that the overstay lead is valid.

• Visa-Specific Initiatives:

- o *F, J, and M Nonimmigrant Visas SEVIS*: ICE HSI leverages SEVIS as part of the overstay identification process. If accepted by a Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP)-certified school, foreign students may be admitted to the United States with a valid F or M nonimmigrant visa. The F nonimmigrant classification generally authorizes study in academic programs; such students typically are admitted for D/S. The M nonimmigrant classification authorizes study in vocational programs; these students are admitted for a fixed period of admission for up to 1 year. Individuals may be admitted to the United States in J nonimmigrant status if accepted for participation in a DOS-verified exchange visitor program. Records of these F, J, and M nonimmigrant admissions, and continued participation in these programs, are tracked and monitored in SEVIS, which facilitates proper reporting and recordkeeping by schools and exchange visitor programs, thereby supporting data relevancy and integrity. SEVIS also provides a mechanism for student and exchange visitor status violators to be identified so that appropriate enforcement action (e.g., denial of admission, denial of benefits, removal from the United States) may be taken when appropriate.
- o *H-2 Visas*: DHS regulations⁸ require that an employer of temporary H-2 workers notify USCIS within 2 business days in the following four scenarios:
 - No-show: An H-2 worker fails to report to work within 5 workdays of the employment start date on the petition or within 5 workdays of the start date established by the employer, whichever is later;
 - Absconder: An H-2 worker fails to report for work for a period of 5 consecutive workdays without the consent of the employer;
 - <u>Termination</u>: An H-2 worker is terminated prior to the completion of H-2 labor or services for which he or she was hired; or
 - <u>Early Completion</u>: An H-2 worker completes the labor or services for which he or she was hired more than 30 days earlier than the employment end date stated on the H-2 petition.

These employer notifications assist DHS in identifying individuals who may have violated the terms and conditions of their H-2A or H-2B nonimmigrant status. USCIS reviews each employer notification to assess if there is a potential violation of the terms and conditions of the H-2 status. To make this assessment, USCIS checks several DHS systems to determine whether the H-2 worker has departed the United States, has changed his or her status to another valid nonimmigrant status, or has adjusted his or her status to lawful permanent

⁸ 8 CFR § 214.2(h)(5)(vi)(B) and 8 CFR 214.2(h)(6)(i)(F).

residence. If the system checks indicate that the H-2 worker: 1) has not left the country, 2) is not in a valid immigration status, and/or 3) is not otherwise authorized to remain in the United States, then USCIS will create a record in TECS. The purpose of the TECS record is to "flag" the individual for CBP, ICE, and DOS in case he or she is encountered as part of the above agency's enforcement actions or visa adjudication. As of June 2018, USCIS is sending directly to CTCEU, as a potential lead for further assessment, a list of H-2 potential absconders and no-shows that resulted in a TECS record.

B. Overstay Enforcement Activities

Nonimmigrant visa overstay enforcement safeguards the integrity of the U.S. immigration system and U.S. immigration laws. DHS has three primary operational Components that can leverage their authorities in support of the overstay enforcement mission. ICE serves as the lead DHS Component investigating and executing visa overstay enforcement actions, including the initiation of removal proceeding, on violators within the United States. CBP serves as the DHS Component responsible for enforcement-related activities for overstay violators who since have departed the United States. USCIS assesses eligibility for immigration benefits and has the authority⁹ to issue NTAs when it unfavorably adjudicates an application or petition and the subject is amenable to removable proceedings. Each DHS Component has access to the full array of DHS information in executing an enforcement action within the Component's purview and coordinates or deconflicts as necessary with other government agencies.

The following outlines enforcement activities of each Component:

ICE: As ICE executes its overstay enforcement mission, those nonimmigrants identified as posing a potential national security or public safety concern are prioritized and referred to ICE field offices for investigation and removal. To accomplish this, ICE conducts specialized research and analysis to confirm the nonimmigrant visa violation and to locate the subject of interest, leverages partner agencies' resources to identify any potential threats, and executes targeted operations and special initiatives throughout the various U.S.-based field offices. The pursuit of these violators provides significant support to the "disrupt and deter" counterterrorism strategy of the United States.

Following the aforementioned vetting process, CTCEU sends verified overstay leads to HSI field offices for further investigation. HSI special agents conduct additional database queries, review all available documentation, coordinate with local authorities, and conduct a full investigation to locate an individual identified as a potential overstay. After locating the subject, HSI special agents conduct a detailed field interview, review any new documentation provided by the subject, and verify the individual's immigration status. If the subject is determined to be out of status, HSI special agents take appropriate actions, including executing a criminal arrest and/or an administrative arrest, for further prosecutorial or removal proceedings. In cases where an HSI special agent is unable to locate the target of investigation, he or she will proceed through a recommended list of investigative measures to ensure that full attention has been given to the investigation. If those measures do not result in locating the visa violator, HSI special agents

-

⁹ Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) §§ 103(a), 239; 8 CFR §§ 2.1, 239.1.

report that "all leads have been exhausted," and the lead is returned to CTCEU for placement into the continuous monitoring cycle until new actionable information (e.g., an address, claim for benefit, departure, or subsequent arrival) is identified. In FY 2017, CTCEU sent 7,353 leads to HSI field offices, which resulted in 1,397 arrests, 85 indictments, and 97 convictions.

In addition to the field-based investigations, ICE HSI CTCEU also has leveraged partnerships with key agencies in the National Capital Region to support the overstay enforcement mission.

- Partnership with the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL): INTERPOL issues notices for fugitives and individuals wanted for serious crimes, missing persons, unidentified bodies, possible threats to public safety, missing or stolen works of art, criminals' *modus operandi*, and terrorists who are subject to United Nations sanctions. Fugitives wanted by INTERPOL who are believed to be in the United States are referred to CTCEU for further action. When CTCEU identifies an individual with an INTERPOL notice, the individual is vetted through various government databases, open source websites, and Intelligence Community holdings to identify immigration status, location information, and/or any derogatory information. CTCEU deconflicts all known information with HSI's Liaison to INTERPOL prior to referring actionable leads to HSI field offices.
- Deportation Liaison Officers: ICE ERO recently augmented its nonimmigrant violator enforcement mission by adding a Deportation Liaison Officer as the Head of Desk for the Americas at the INTERPOL General Secretariat in Lyon, France. In addition, ERO has Deportation Liaison Officers assigned to INTERPOL Washington, D.C., the U.S. National Central Bureau, and Europol at The Hague, The Netherlands. These officers provide immigration enforcement subject matter expertise to our partners to increase ICE's intelligence and investigative leads on fugitives, immigration fraud, and other unknown public safety threats through identity, criminal, and travel information exchange.
- Absent Without Leave (AWOL) Program: CTCEU also has partnered with the U.S. Department of Defense to address instances when International Military Students (IMS), who come to the United States on diplomatic visas, become AWOL and therefore violate the terms of their visa status. Because these subjects are highly trained, usually in special operations, intelligence, or other disciplines, it is imperative that HSI resources are directed toward locating and placing them in removal proceedings as soon as possible.
- Coordination on Joint Terrorism Task Force (JTTF) Cases: CTCEU supports HSI's efforts within the Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI) JTTFs. HSI is the largest federal contributor to the JTTF outside of the FBI, and its immigration authorities, expertise, and information are key among the various contributions to support the counterterrorism mission. In the event that a subject of interest is an overstay, student, or other nonimmigrant visa violator, CTCEU facilitates an expedited lead referral to the appropriate field office for possible action and for consideration of disruption options in furtherance of the JTTF investigation.
- <u>Visa Revocation Partnership (DOS, ICE HSI CTCEU)</u>: The Visa Revocation Program is run by the DOS Visa Office, and as such may revoke the visa of an individual who already

possesses a U.S. visa. CTCEU is tasked with leading HSI's investigative efforts related to visa revocation cases and has implemented standard operating procedures to ensure the timely and comprehensive investigation of all national security-related revocation cases, in coordination with DOS. If CTCEU identifies an individual who has had his or her visa revoked and is presently in the United States, CTCEU analysts forward a collateral investigative request to the appropriate HSI field office for further investigation. Through this partnership with DOS, CTCEU seeks to ensure that all nonimmigrants in the United States who have had their visas revoked are investigated thoroughly and removed from the United States, if appropriate.

CBP: For validated out-of-country overstay violations, CBP's AVU creates records in TECS to inform officers at DOS, USCIS, CBP, and other entities of the overstay violation. If these reviews confirm that the traveler has overstayed, that traveler may lose the ability to participate in the VWP program, may have his or her nonimmigrant visa no longer recognized by CBP as valid, and/or may have a 3- or 10-year bar placed on any subsequent admission. To date, the work of the AVU has resulted in more than 13,000 actions taken of this kind.

The AVU currently only vets and validates out-of-country overstays of certain classes because of resource limitations; however, it intends to expand its operations to vet all nonimmigrant classes of admission. The sanctions imposed on out-of-country overstays incentivize compliance and minimize the risk of additional interior enforcement requirements from repeat offenders.

USCIS: USCIS maintains initiatives that are applicable to the enforcement of visa overstays, and will issue an NTA, where appropriate, consistent with existing USCIS policy and guidance, as well as with the implementation of its 2018 NTA guidance. USCIS adheres to DHS's overall removal priorities while ensuring that its policies promote national security and the integrity of the Nation's lawful immigration system.

USCIS is implementing the NTA guidance incrementally with only employment-based forms and criminal NTAs pending implementation. This guidance is being implemented in a phased approach to allow sufficient time for training and attention to logistical needs.

C. Deterrence, Outreach, and Prevention

DHS also has instituted various initiatives to deter and otherwise prevent overstay violations. This is accomplished through direct notifications to nonimmigrant visitors, outreach, and education programs.

CBP Notifications: In FY 2017, CBP initiated a notification process for VWP travelers who overstayed their period of admission in the United States, emailing them regarding their noncompliance and informing them of the ramifications of their violation. The email directs the individual to visit the website (https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/I94/#/home) to find information on his or her status within the Traveler Compliance Check tab. The website provides the number of days overstayed and next steps.

More recently, CBP also began sending out notifications to VWP travelers 10 days in advance of the end date of their period of authorized admission. The e-mail notifications indicate that the traveler has 10 days remaining and refers the traveler to the I-94 website. CBP expects to phase in other nonimmigrant classes of admission.

VWP Outreach: DHS currently is requiring VWP countries with an overstay rate equal to or exceeding 2 percent to implement a public awareness campaign intended to educate their nationals on the importance of abiding by the terms for admission into the United States.

ICE HSI Project Campus Sentinel: Project Campus Sentinel is an outreach initiative that began in 2011 directed toward academic institutions approved by HSI SEVP to enroll nonimmigrant students. This program builds a mutual partnership between local ICE HSI Special Agents and SEVP-certified institutions by collaborating to prevent both the criminal exploitation and radicalization of students on U.S. campuses. The SEVP Field Representatives Unit and Campus Public Safety entities often perform joint visits to schools to ensure better communication with all school-related stakeholders, with the aim of increasing the exchange of information leading to an increased level of safety and security of the students, faculty, and the institution. This exchange enables HSI to detect and proactively combat student visa exploitations and to address inherent national security vulnerabilities within the school's foreign student population and school officials.

SEVP Outreach - Students, Exchange Visitors, and Schools: HSI's SEVP also plays an important role in compliance-related efforts. To support overstay deterrence, SEVP ensures its "Study in the States" website leverages blogs, articles, and social media content to educate nonimmigrant students and exchange visitors on compliance requirements, including the need to depart the United States following program completion. SEVP also maintains a contact center where schools, students, and other stakeholders can call or email with questions.

Additionally, SEVP reviews schools prior to their certification expiration date and regularly reviews schools as part of the ongoing compliance and biannual recertification process to ensure that schools remain compliant with all recordkeeping and reporting requirements under U.S. immigration laws. Through its certification and review process, as well as its nationwide field representative engagement program, SEVP can monitor schools, conduct site visits, and identify potential issues early on to help prevent any possible visa status violations.

SEVP - Increasing Inspections of Employers and Oversight of Practical Training (OPT): Increasing OPT for employers, and working with other ICE components to ensure that entities that employ nonimmigrant students are reviewed, will reduce the potential for students to abuse the practical training program and thus may reduce overstays. This will include increased data analytics to identify:

• Employers and schools that potentially are abusing the program,

- Increased site visits to science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) OPT¹⁰ employers, and
- Increased scrutiny of Form I-983, the training form developed in conjunction with STEM OPT.

SEVP - Increasing Functionality of SEVIS: SEVP has improved SEVIS functionality in several ways in recent years, from initiating the SEVIS portal to facilitate reporting to improving the reliability of certain data, such as calculating the accrual of unemployment days for nonimmigrant students. It is now possible to calculate accurately if a nonimmigrant student has exceeded the permissible number of days of unemployment while on OPT or STEM OPT. Prioritizing the arrest and initiation of removal proceedings against any student who has exceeded the permissible period of unemployment may help to reduce overstays.

D. Proposed Recommendations to Reduce Overstay Rates

In addition to the various ongoing initiatives to deter and otherwise prevent overstay violations, ICE HSI proposes the following recommendations that, if implemented, would aid in reducing the overstay rates for nonimmigrant visas.

Align Consequences for Visa Overstays and Unlawful Border Crossers: A significant portion of the population of removable aliens in the United States has been admitted as nonimmigrants, but has failed to depart the United States in a timely manner when the period of admission expires. Proposed legislation should ensure that aliens who acquire unlawful immigration status because of a failure to depart the United States in a timely manner when their period of admission expires are subject to the same consequences as those who enter without inspection.

Proposed Legislative Changes for IMSs who have been Reported AWOL: IMSs who have come to the United States on A-2 visas have a high level of training, usually in fields such as special operations or intelligence; therefore, it is imperative to deter the possibility of these individuals going AWOL. It is recommended that legislation should be implemented so that, once an IMS is reported AWOL, he or she is prohibited from receiving any type of immigration benefit and/or relief.

may be authorized two lifetime STEM OPT extensions at two different education levels.

13

¹⁰ OPT is a form of temporary employment available for eligible F-1 students that directly relates to a student's major area of study in the United States. A student can apply for 12 months of OPT at each education level (e.g., one 12-month OPT period at the bachelor's level and another 12-month period at the master's level). STEM OPT is a 24-month extension of the OPT period for certain F-1 students who have earned DHS-approved STEM degrees and who participate in practical training opportunities with employers that meet certain requirements. A student

IV. Ongoing Enhancements and Improvements

DHS continues to improve its efforts to collect, analyze, and report information affecting the overstay enforcement mission. By enhancing current capabilities and/or developing new methods, DHS is better equipped to track visa overstays accurately for enforcement action and otherwise to deter violations. The following highlights current initiatives under development.

A. Information Technology Modernization Efforts

As part of the ADIS Modernization efforts, CBP is implementing enhancements to integrate data updates more accurately from USCIS and ICE systems on immigration and student-related updates at the person-centric level. ADIS also is being reengineered with modernized logic to identify overstays more accurately and to rematch the entire ADIS database with current namematching algorithms. These steps will improve ADIS's ability to identify accurately and automatically the status of a given traveler. As many naturalized U.S. citizens travel to and from the United States, this travel sometimes creates false overstay leads in the system. The aim of the above efforts is to refine and reduce the number of false system-generated overstays leads. CBP also is exploring methods to capture and store nonimmigrant visitor e-mail addresses in existing systems and applications, such as the Electronic System for Travel Authorization, which determines a traveler's eligibility to utilize the VWP, and the Electronic Visa Update System, which allows certain nonimmigrant visa holders to update their biographic information periodically to facilitate their travel to the United States. These technological enhancements will facilitate higher quality overstay leads data and thereby bolster enforcement operations. They, furthermore, will allow CBP to expand its public notifications to travelers regarding the overstay status.

Concurrently, ICE is modernizing SEVIS to make the database person-centric, enabling better tracking of students and avoiding duplication of active records. The modernization will improve student reporting and information updates because it will enable and require students to report changes to their studies or personal information rather than relying solely on designated school officials for such information. In addition, the modernization will improve user interfaces and provide additional training and resources for school officials, reducing data entry and record matching errors.

B. Bolstering Enforcement and Deterrence Initiatives

ICE continues to pursue initiatives to identify, locate, and remove high-risk overstay violators more efficiently. As one initiative, SEVP and CTCEU established a partnership, embedded within the SEVP Analysis and Operations Center, to enhance their respective programs' collaboration and coordination on criminal and administrative investigations. This partnership provides a more coherent and focused effort on investigations by HSI field offices of F and M nonimmigrant students, designated school officials, and SEVP-certified schools. As a separate initiative, CTCEU also launched an outreach program, "Project About-Face," to help to address situations involving foreign military students who have absconded or gone AWOL. Project

About-Face focuses on educating the military and other stakeholders to improve understanding of the IMS AWOL process and the steps necessary to ensure a successful investigation. It also raises awareness of the AWOL program and the unique requirements of an IMS AWOL investigation, aids in facilitating accurate reporting procedures, and fully explains the authorities that HSI possesses in these investigations.

The ICE HSI Office of Intelligence (HSI INTEL) is piloting a program to evaluate visa denials based on national security criteria to identify connected individuals in the United States. Project Harbinger involves HSI INTEL working closely with CTCEU, VSP, and DOS to develop data to provide to CTCEU to prioritize visa overstay targets. This program also examines the recommended visa refusals by VSP to DOS based on vetting of high-risk visa applicants. These visa refusals are examined for information on recommended refusals, creating networks of subjects and their associates that may be exploited by HSI for investigative and intelligence purposes. The identification of larger networks connected to the recommended refusal ideally will generate more leads for both HSI and its foreign partners. Project Harbinger also includes an assessment that will utilize data collected by the Pre-Adjudicated Threat Recognition Intelligence Operations Team and the aforementioned network analysis to identify any larger trends in visa refusals at the area of responsibility.

USCIS provides information on its website on how employers of H-2A and H-2B workers can notify USCIS about H-2 workers who failed to report to work within 5 days of their start date or who left without notice and failed to return for 5 consecutive workdays. As a condition of approval of their H-2A or H-2B petition, employers must agree to notify DHS within 2 work days of any such event. The website lists the information that must be provided when making such notification to USCIS. Currently, employers can provide notification to USCIS either by mail or by email.

USCIS creates TECS records to flag the H-2 worker's potential violation in the event that he or she is encountered by CBP, ICE, or DOS. Additionally, as of June 2018, USCIS proactively is sending a list of potential H-2 nonimmigrant absconders and no-shows that resulted in a TECS record to CTCEU as a potential lead for further assessment.

V. Admission for Duration of Status

D/S is a term used for the period of time that foreign nationals are admitted for a specific program or activity, which may be variable, instead of for a certain time. For example, D/S for F nonimmigrants is defined as "the time during which an F student is pursuing a full course of study at an [approved] educational institution ... or engaging in authorized practical training."11 The authorized period of admission ends when the foreign national has accomplished the purpose of his or her travel or no longer is engaged in authorized activities pertaining to that purpose. F nonimmigrants who enroll in academic programs generally are admitted for D/S. For example, if an F-1 nonimmigrant student enrolls in a program of study at a U.S. university, his or her authorized period of stay generally ends upon the completion of a course of study and any authorized practical training. Such F-1 nonimmigrant students also are allotted a 60-day grace period thereafter either to prepare for departure and to leave the United States, or to enroll in another program of study, change their nonimmigrant status, or seek some other immigration benefit or means to remain lawfully in the United States. By contrast, M nonimmigrants enrolled in vocational programs generally are admitted for a fixed period of up to 1 year. Nonimmigrant students admitted in the M classification may be authorized for a limited amount of practical training after the completion of their vocational studies. Some additional nonimmigrant visa categories that authorize D/S admission include certain exchange visitors (J visas) and representatives of foreign media outlets (I visas). Nonimmigrants admitted for D/S who violate or fail to maintain their status generally are violating the terms and conditions of their admission. Such nonimmigrants may accrue unlawful presence and be subject to removal from the United States.

The identification of a possible overstay violation is similar to those under other classes of admission. As with all other overstay leads, the initial automated identification of a person admitted for D/S as a possible overstay is based upon ADIS entry and exit information. For F and J visas, ADIS matches the entry information against the last date of valid status as reflected by SEVIS (i.e., the date the F or J nonimmigrant's program is due to end or, for M nonimmigrants, the specific date noted on the admission document). The end date for a program can vary from that established at the time of initial entry for a variety of reasons including changes in programs of study, transfers, and authorization for practical training. When such a change occurs, SEVIS is updated by the designated school official. In this way, SEVIS is able to track the last date of valid status. For example, when an F student completes a program of study, the designated school official updates the student's program end date in SEVIS. By regulation, the student is then afforded 60 days from the program end date to leave the United States. 12 If a student falls out of status for any reason, the student's record is marked as "terminated" in SEVIS and he or she generally must leave the country immediately or seek reinstatement through USCIS (or DOS, in the case of J nonimmigrant exchange visitors). In all cases, the last date of valid status is calculated on the basis of the relevant regulations and the authorized activities for each nonimmigrant.

¹¹ 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(f)(5)(i).

¹² 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(f)(5)(iv).

Although SEVIS tracks the immigration status of F, J, and M¹³ nonimmigrants, the J exchange visitor program is administered by DOS, not by DHS. SEVIS transmits the F, J, or M status expiration date to CBP through an automated process. CBP uses this data to cross-reference the information with the nonimmigrant visitor's travel records and any available updates to his or her immigration status.

As noted previously, the resulting Suspected In-Country Overstay leads are sent to ICE to assess and to initiate removal proceedings in appropriate cases, and out-of-country overstay leads are sent to CBP for vetting and any appropriate enforcement should the individual attempt to reenter the United States.

Concerns have been expressed that admission for D/S can complicate the use of certain enforcement tools, such as applying unlawful presence (3- or 10-year) bars to individuals seeking admission if they previously have overstayed their nonimmigrant visa. ¹⁴ This is because in general, individuals admitted for D/S are able to avoid accrual of unlawful presence even after a status violation until the day after a formal finding of a status violation. ¹⁵

Currently, CBP, ICE, USCIS, and the DHS Office of Strategy, Policy, and Plans are considering changes to D/S admissions for certain nonimmigrants, including F and J nonimmigrants. As part of that policy review, DHS is exploring the possibility of revising existing regulations to eliminate D/S admissions for certain categories of nonimmigrants, including F, J, and I nonimmigrants.

-

¹³ M visa nonimmigrants are "admitted for a fixed time period, which is the period necessary to complete the [vocational] course of study indicated on the Form I-20." 8 C.F.R. § 214.4(m)(5). A specific end date is identified on the nonimmigrant's admission document, and, therefore, it is not a D/S admission.

¹⁴ 8 U.S.C. § 1182(a)(9)(B)(i).

¹⁵ USCIS Adjudicator's Field Manual (AFM) Chapter 40.9.2: Consolidation of Guidance Concerning Unlawful Presence for Purposes of Sections 212(a)(9)(b)(i) and 212(a)(9)(c)(i)(I) of the Act; issued May 6, 2009. This policy, as outlined in a May 6, 2009 policy memo, is currently in place because the U.S. District Court for the Middle District of North Carolina issued a nationwide preliminary injunction regarding PM-602-1060 and PM-602-1060.1, policy memoranda titled, "Accrual of Unlawful Presence and F, J, and M Nonimmigrants," on May 10, 2018, and Aug. 9, 2018.

VI. Conclusion

Identifying overstays is important for national security, public safety, immigration enforcement, and the processing of applications for immigration benefits. DHS has improved data collection processes in the entry/exit environment significantly, which include: the collection of data on all admissions to the United States by foreign nationals; devoting greater resources to the enforcement of visa overstays; and effectuating preventive measures to deter future visa violators.

Despite the different infrastructural, operational, and logistical challenges presented in the overstay environment, DHS has resolved many of the issues regarding the collection of departure information for foreign nationals through reallocation of resources and interagency and intraagency partnerships to improve the identification, enforcement, and deterrence of visa overstays. Further efforts, including partnerships with other governments and the private sector (e.g., airlines, airports, cruise lines), are ongoing and will continue to improve the process for combating visa overstays.

DHS has made significant progress in terms of the ability to report data on overstays accurately, which was made possible by congressional realignment of Department resources to centralize the overall mission in identifying overstays. Although data integrity is only one element necessary for combating nonimmigrant visa violators, it is an important aspect for the development of a comprehensive visa overstay strategy.

DHS will continue to develop and test its current programs and initiatives while continuing to identify vulnerabilities and while improving different phases of the overstay enforcement and deterrence strategy. Moreover, DHS will continue to release publicly this annual Overstay Enforcement and Deterrence Report and looks forward to providing updates to congressional members and their staff on its ongoing progress.

Appendix – Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Definition
ADIS	Arrival and Departure Information System
AVU	ADIS Vetting Unit
AWOL	Absent Without Leave
CBP	U.S. Customs and Border Protection
CLAIMS3	Computer Linked Application Immigration Management System 3
CTCEU	Counterterrorism and Criminal Exploitation Unit
D/S	Duration of Status
DHS	U.S. Department of Homeland Security
DOS	U.S. Department of State
ERO	Enforcement and Removal Operations
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
FY	Fiscal Year
GAO	U.S. Government Accountability Office
HSI	Homeland Security Investigations
ICE	U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement
IMS	International Military Student
INA	Immigration and Nationality Act
INTEL	Office of Intelligence
INTERPOL	International Criminal Police Organization
JTTF	Joint Terrorism Task Force
NCTC	National Counterterrorism Center
NTA	Notice to Appear
OPT	Optional Practical Training
OST	Open Source Team
SEVIS	Student and Exchange Visitor Information System
SEVP	Student and Exchange Visitor Program
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics
USCIS	U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services
VSP	Visa Security Program
VWP	Visa Waiver Program