Privacy Impact Assessment for the U.S. Customs and Border Protection Form I-94 Automation

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Abstract

U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) issues Form I-94 among other purposes, to provide documentation of the approved length of stay and departure of nonimmigrant aliens. The current form is paper-based and includes a detachable portion with an admission (I-94) number, which the nonimmigrant alien keeps while in the United States as documentation of status. CBP is issuing an interim final rule (IFR) to enable CBP to transition from a paper Form I-94 to an automated process in certain circumstances. This Privacy Impact Assessment (PIA) will address how CBP is implementing the electronic Form I-94 pursuant to the Fair Information Practice Principles (FIPP).

Introduction

Paper Form I-94 process at airports and seaports

In accordance with current law and policy, the paper Form I-94 is provided to certain arriving nonresident aliens by air or sea in order to document their U.S. arrival and departure and provides evidence of the terms of admission or parole. The form contains two parts, the arrival portion and the departure portion. The nonresident alien completes part of the form while en route to the United States, and presents it to a CBP officer as part of the primary inspection. Upon the officer’s decision regarding the passenger’s application for admission to the U.S., the officer stamps the passenger’s passport and the I-94 form with an admission date and the class of admission. The detachable bottom portion is provided to the passenger as evidence of lawful entry.

The information the nonimmigrant alien traveler provides in writing on the I-94 arrival portion includes:

- Family name
- First (Given) Name
- Birth Date
- Country of Citizenship
- Sex
- Passport Issuance Date
- Passport Expiration Date

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1 Class of admission refers to the visa class of the arriving nonimmigrant alien. For example, a business visitor may be listed as “B-1”, while a tourist may be listed as “B-2”. The U.S. Department of State website provides a complete list of visa classes. http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/types/types_1286.html

2 Passport issuance date, passport expiration date, telephone number, and email address are newer fields not found on all forms currently in circulation.
• Passport Number
• Airline and Flight Number (if applicable)
• Country Where You Live
• Country Where You Boarded
• City Where Visa Was issued
• Date Issued
• Address While in the United States
• Telephone Number in the United States Where You Can be Reached
• Email Address

Under the current I-94 paper-based process, CBP mails the arrival portion of the Form I-94 received at the ports of entry to the Nonimmigrant Data Processing Services (NIDPS) processing center in London, Kentucky. There, the forms are scanned and their data elements are manually entered and stored in a file that is uploaded into CBP’s Non-Immigrant Information System (NIIS),\(^3\) which resides on the TECS platform. CBP officials at NIDPS manually destroy the Form I-94 paper arrival portion 180 days from the nonimmigrant alien’s date of departure.

The nonimmigrant alien surrenders the departure portion of the Form I-94 upon departure. If the alien is departing by commercial air or sea carrier he or she surrenders the form to the carrier, which returns the form to CBP. The departure portion is then entered into NIIS by NIDPS. The information provided on this portion of the Form I-94 includes:

• Family Name
• First Name
• Birth Date
• Country of Citizenship

Nonimmigrant aliens visiting the United States often use the I-94 number for documentation of status while in the United States when completing certain applications, such as those required to obtain a driver’s license, benefits from state public assistance agencies/organizations, a social security card, or a change of status from U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). DHS components such as USCIS and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) have access to NIIS, via TECS, to verify information about a nonimmigrant’s status. Non-DHS agencies can verify an individual’s work authorization status by requesting it from USCIS, which references NIIS information. CBP also provides I-94 information to the Department of Commerce (DOC) for travel statistics purposes.

**Automation of the Form I-94 at airports and seaports**

The paper Form I-94 was established prior to advances in technology and the

implementation of security measures that enable CBP to collect arrival and departure information about passengers electronically. CBP has published an IFR to revise the regulations to permit CBP to transition the Form I-94 from paper to an electronic process for nonimmigrant aliens arriving by commercial air and sea, and to provide notice to the public regarding that process. For nonimmigrant aliens arriving in or departing from the United States by commercial air or sea carrier, the data elements collected on the paper Form I-94 duplicate the information that CBP currently electronically collects through other systems.

As a result of enhanced security measures implemented by CBP subsequent to the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, CBP regulations require commercial vessel carriers and commercial and private air carriers to electronically transmit advance manifest information regarding all passengers, crew members, and non-crew members (cargo flights only) arriving and departing the United States. The information is transmitted to CBP through the Advance Passenger Information System (APIS).4

The information transmitted using APIS consists, in part, of similar information collected through the paper I-94 form. APIS collects information that appears on the biographical data page of travel documents, such as passports issued by foreign governments. For passengers, APIS data consists of certain biographical information and conveyance details collected via the passenger reservation and check-in processes. The following information must be submitted for each individual onboard the aircraft or commercial vessel:

- Full Name (last, first, and, if available, middle)
- Date of Birth
- Gender
- Citizenship
- Country of Residence
- Status on Board the Aircraft/Vessel
- Travel Document Type (e.g. passport; alien registration card, etc.)
- Travel Document Number
- Travel Document Country of Issuance
- Travel Document Expiration Date
- Alien Registration Number, when applicable

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• Address While in the United States

In addition to the manifest information listed above for each individual, the air or sea carrier must also provide information about the flight or voyage. Such information includes the flight number or vessel name and the place of departure.

Additional information about the nonimmigrant alien’s visa is transmitted to CBP by the Department of State via the Consolidated Consular Database (CCD). When the nonimmigrant alien arrives to the U.S. and passes through inspection and admission or parole, the CBP officer is able to amend or to collect additional data, such as updated address or phone number while in the United States.

Thus, for nonimmigrant aliens arriving in the United States by commercial air or sea carrier, CBP obtains nearly all the information contained on the paper Form I-94 electronically from the carriers and the Department of State, and is able to collect any additional fields from the individual at the time of inspection.5

Therefore, CBP is transitioning to an automated process whereby CBP will create an electronic Form I-94 based on the traveler’s APIS and CCD information, which CBP will make available to the nonimmigrant alien. At this time, the automated process will apply only to nonimmigrant aliens arriving by commercial carrier at air and sea ports of entry. This is because the electronic record draws largely from APIS information submitted by air and sea carriers. However, CBP will provide a paper Form I-94 to anyone who requests it; to special classes of aliens, such as refugees and asylees, who may require more extensive processing at secondary inspection; to those crossing at a land border; or whenever CBP determines the issuance of a paper form is appropriate.

The electronic Form I-94 will be created during the inspection process at the time of admission or parole when the CBP officer pulls information from the traveler’s APIS record and CCD record, and enters any additional data obtained during the inspection process. The electronic Form I-94 collects and maintains the same data elements found on the paper Form I-94. Any information the officer would have written or stamped on the paper form at the time of admission is entered into the electronic form. For nonimmigrant aliens departing by commercial air or vessel, the departure record is created from outbound APIS information using the U.S. Visitor and Immigrant Status Indicator Technology (US-VISIT) Arrival and Departure Information System (ADIS) to match the departure to the correct arrival record.

Online I-94 number retrieval for nonimmigrant aliens

Currently, nonimmigrant aliens are able to access their I-94 number by referring to the

5 Although APIS data is collected from private aircraft, because of operational restrictions CBP does not intend to extend the electronic Form I-94 to all private aircraft at this time.
paper departure portion of the Form I-94 for the purpose of applying for certain benefits while in the United States, now this access will become electronic for those individuals issued an electronic Form I-94. Nonimmigrant alien travelers will be able to access their electronic Form I-94 via a website CBP has established a secure for this purpose: https://www.cbp.gov/I94. The website will provide nonimmigrant alien travelers with read-only access to the automated I-94 record associated with his or her admission.

Nonimmigrant alien travelers who have an electronic Form I-94 will log on to the website using their last name, first (given) name, date of birth, passport number, country of issuance, date of entry, and class of admission. After supplying this information, available from the individual’s passport, the website will provide the limited information of the CBP assigned I-94 number and the “Admit until” date in a printable format. This limited information cannot be used to obtain benefits unless accompanied by valid photo identification that matches the bearer. The printout from the website will be similar to the departure portion of the paper form with respect to the information it contains. CBP will continue to stamp the traveler’s passport at the time of inspection and admission. CBP will distribute information about the website and procedures for obtaining a printout to the nonimmigrant upon arrival in the United States.

Regulatory changes

For CBP to incorporate an electronic Form I-94 in operations CBP must amend its regulations. CBP is adding a definition of “Form I-94” in title 8 of the U.S. Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) to accommodate the collection of I-94 information in either paper or electronic format, so that the term Form I-94 “includes the collection of arrival/departure and admission or parole information by DHS, whether in paper or electronic format, which is made available to the person about whom the information has been collected, as may be prescribed by DHS.” CBP is amending provisions throughout title 8 CFR to refer to the new definition, to ensure that those reading these provisions are aware that the new definition exists and may apply.

Just as CBP is amending the definition of “Form I-94” to include the electronic version of the Form I-94, CBP is amending the regulations to clarify how the Form I-94 is handled to allow for the electronic as well as the paper Form I-94: “presentation” of the Form I-94 includes providing a printout of the electronic record; and “issuance” of the Form I-94 includes the creation of the electronic Form I-94. These amendments are important because several government agencies and public assistance organizations rely on presentation of an issued Form I-94. USCIS uses Form I-94 information to verify lawful admission or parole when adjudicating immigration benefit requests, confirming employment authorization for employers participating in USCIS’s E-Verify program, or verifying immigration status for benefit granting state and federal government agencies participating in USCIS’s Systematic Alien Verification for Entitlements (SAVE) program. The Social Security Administration (SSA), state agencies, such as Departments of Motor Vehicles (DMV), and public assistance agencies and organizations, use
Form I-94 to verify eligibility for benefits.

**Fair Information Practice Principles (FIPP)**

The Privacy Act of 1974 articulates concepts of how the Federal government should treat individuals and their information and imposes duties upon Federal agencies regarding the collection, use, dissemination, and maintenance of personally identifiable information. The Homeland Security Act of 2002 Section 222(2) states that the Chief Privacy Officer shall assure that information is handled in full compliance with the fair information practices as set out in the Privacy Act of 1974.

In response to this obligation, the DHS Privacy Office developed a set of Fair Information Practice Principles (FIPP) from the underlying concepts of the Privacy Act to encompass the full breadth and diversity of the information and interactions of DHS. The FIPPs account for the nature and purpose of the information being collected in relation to DHS’s mission to preserve, protect, and secure.

DHS conducts PIAs on both programs and information technology systems, pursuant to the E-Government Act of 2002, Section 208 and the Homeland Security Act of 2002, Section 222. Given that the CBP I-94 Form automation is an ongoing technological transformation rather than a particular information technology system, this PIA is conducted as it relates to the DHS construct of the Fair Information Practice Principles. This PIA examines the privacy impact of the CBP I-94 Form automation process as it relates to the Fair Information Practice Principles.

1. **Principle of Transparency**

   Principle: *DHS should be transparent and provide notice to the individual regarding its collection, use, dissemination, and maintenance of PII. Technologies or systems using PII must be described in a SORN and PIA, as appropriate. There should be no system the existence of which is a secret.*

   The CBP systems that collected and stored the I-94 data from the paper forms will be the same systems involved in the fully automated process, and the data elements will be the same as well. DHS has provided notice of its involved systems through the publication of the TECS PIA and NIIS SORN, as well as the APIS PIA and SORN. A full description of the transition to an automated I-94 process is provided by this PIA.

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At the time of entry to the U.S., a CBP officer will provide each nonimmigrant alien traveler who is issued an electronic Form I-94 at the time of inspection with a flier containing information about the CBP I-94 number retrieval website and procedures for obtaining a printout. This flier will provide the website address and information in eight languages. There will also be links to the I-94 number retrieval page on one of the main CBP website pages for nonimmigrant aliens, as well as on the websites of external agencies where nonimmigrant aliens seek benefits requiring an I-94 number. The retrieval page itself also features an I-94 Frequently Asked Questions tab, which explains to the nonimmigrant alien what information must be provided and where that information can be found.

Before nonimmigrant aliens enter and submit their information on the I-94 number retrieval webpage, they can click a link to view CBP’s Privacy Act Statement as required by 5 U.S.C. § 552a(e)(3), which provides them with a basic overview of the uses, dissemination, and authority for CBP’s collection of I-94 data and direct them to the appropriate SORNs.

2. Principle of Individual Participation

Principle: **DHS should involve the individual in the process of using PII. DHS should, to the extent practical, seek individual consent for the collection, use, dissemination, and maintenance of PII and should provide mechanisms for appropriate access, correction, and redress regarding DHS’s use of PII.**

While the elimination of the paper Form I-94 in certain contexts means individuals are no longer directly supplying CBP with their PII, CBP’s access to the same information from APIS and the Department of State makes this separate collection from the individual redundant. In voluntarily seeking a passport, visa, and booking a flight or commercial voyage, these nonimmigrant aliens are notified that the information they have provided and the details of their travel will be made available to CBP for purposes of determining admissibility to the U.S. Also, at the time of inspection and admission or parole, the nonimmigrant alien will have an opportunity to give the CBP officer updated information, such as address or phone number while in the United States, and resolve any other questions by the CBP Officer.

CBP’s I-94 number retrieval website will not be used to collect or store PII for dissemination or other use. Its sole purpose will be to allow individuals access to their electronic I-94, including the number, by providing only the necessary PII to match them to CBP’s existing records. CBP will continue to share NIIS records with external agencies for law enforcement/immigration and statistical purposes as discussed above. Moreover, the manner in which I-94 information is available to other entities will remain unchanged. For government agencies and public assistance organizations that require nonimmigrant aliens present Form I-94 information, the process will not meaningfully change; the nonimmigrant alien will now present a printout from the website rather than the departure portion of the paper form I-94. This process provides individuals with the opportunity to continue to have control over nongovernmental
agencies receiving this information only where the nonimmigrant alien believes it appropriate, usually in exchange for a particular benefit.

The automation of the Form I-94 will not affect an individual’s ability to access the information. Individuals may still submit a Privacy Act request or Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request to access information stored in NIIS, including entry and exit records. This accessible information includes information from the carrier via APIS or the Department of State used to generate the information on the electronic Form I-94, the length of admission, and departure information. However, NIIS may contain a record of disclosures related to an ongoing law enforcement investigation in conformance with exceptions under the Privacy Act and/or the routine uses in the NIIS SORN. As such, DHS will claim exemption pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 552a(j)(2) from sections (c)(3), (e)(8), and (g)(1) of the Privacy Act, and pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 552a(k)(2) from section (c)(3) of the Privacy Act, from providing the individual the accounting of disclosures as necessary and appropriate to protect this information. Individuals seeking notification of and access to records contained in NIIS or seeking to contest its content, may submit a FOIA or Privacy Act request with CBP at https://foia.cbp.gov/palMain.aspx, or by mailing a request to:

CBP FOIA Headquarters Office
U.S. Customs and Border Protection
FOIA Division
90 K Street NE, 9th Floor
Washington, DC 20002
Fax Number: (202) 325-0230

If a traveler believes that CBP actions are the result of incorrect or inaccurate information, then inquiries may be directed to CBP at the CBP Info Center, Office of Public Affairs, U.S. Customs and Border Protection, (CBP Info Center, OPA – CSC – Rosslyn, U.S. Customs and Border Protection, 1300 Pennsylvania Ave., N.W., Washington, DC 20229) or through the DHS Traveler Redress Inquiry Program (TRIP) at 601 South 12th Street, TSA-901, Arlington, VA 22202-4220 or online at www.dhs.gov/trip.

3. Principle of Purpose Specification

Principle: DHS should specifically articulate the authority which permits the collection of PII and specifically articulate the purpose or purposes for which the PII is intended to be used.

The I-94 automated process collects and stores PII in NIIS for the same purpose as the paper process. Authorities supporting CBP’s collection and use of the I-94 data include:

- 50 U.S.C. 401 §§ et seq., The Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004;
8 U.S.C. §§ 1101 et seq., The Immigration and Nationality Act; and

By collecting, maintaining and sharing information on nonresident aliens in accordance with existing privacy laws and policies, NIIS furthers CBP’s mission to enhance national security, facilitate legitimate travel, and ensure the integrity of the U.S. immigration system. The information is used for entry screening of nonimmigrant visitors and to make admissibility to the U.S. determinations. NIIS also serves to track the length of admissibility of the nonimmigrant alien and maintain a central repository of contact information for these aliens. It captures arrival and departure information to identify travel patterns, arrivals without departure, and nonimmigrant aliens overstaying their time in the United States to determine future admissibility. The timely and accurate capturing of this data is necessary for monitoring compliance with U.S. law.

The Paperwork Reduction Act, 44 U.S.C. § 3501, supports the automation of the I-94; the OMB Control Number is 1651-0111.

4. Principle of Data Minimization

Principle: **DHS should only collect PII that is directly relevant and necessary to accomplish the specified purpose(s) and only retain PII for as long as is necessary to fulfill the specified purpose(s). PII should be disposed of in accordance with DHS records disposition schedules as approved by the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA).**

The I-94 information collected and maintained in NIIS is only that which is necessary for CBP to make entry screening and admissibility determinations, and is retained for seventy-five (75) years from the date obtained to inform any future applicable benefits related to immigration and for law enforcement purposes. However, NIIS records that are linked to active law enforcement records, and/or investigations will remain accessible for the life of the law enforcement activities to which they are related, if longer than the standard retention period.

While the paper-based I-94 process required manual destruction of forms held at the CBP processing center in London, Kentucky, 180 days from date of departure, the new automated process eliminates this redundant copy of the I-94 data that is already in a CBP system and ensures data minimization by allowing automatic deletion of records at the end of the appropriate retention period. Furthermore, the new CBP I-94 number retrieval website only requests the minimum information necessary to match the individual to an I-94 number and ensure that it is the correct number. The PII provided for the retrieval is not stored.
5. Principle of Use Limitation

Principle: DHS should use PII solely for the purpose(s) specified in the notice. Sharing PII outside the Department should be for a purpose compatible with the purpose for which the PII was collected.

DHS’ use of the PII in the automated I-94 process and any sharing of this PII outside the Department will be no different than with the paper-based process. The NIIS arrival and departure information is used to identify travel patterns, arrivals without departure, and nonimmigrant aliens overstaying their time in the U.S. These uses serve to enhance national security, facilitate legitimate travel, and ensure the integrity of the U.S. immigration system. All external sharing of this information is compatible with these purposes. Current sharing outside of CBP includes:

- ADIS: Receives NIIS data to match the visitor’s departure to the correct arrival record.
- Intelligence community: Departure data is sent to the intelligence community on a daily basis, and the prior week’s data is sent on a weekly basis, for the purpose of counterterrorism and national security.
- FBI Foreign Terrorist Tracking Task Force (FTTTF): Uses NIIS information in identifying and tracking foreign terrorists that have already entered the United States.
- Selective Service: Receives NIIS data on a monthly basis for registration purposes.
- Citizenship and Immigration Services: Uses the NIIS data as proof of lawful entry and to assist USCIS analysts in determining eligibility for immigration benefits, i.e., extension of stay, change of nonimmigrant status, or adjustment of status to Lawful Permanent Resident.
- Social Security Administration: Receives NIIS data to confirm that a nonimmigrant alien has a class of admission that authorizes them to obtain employment and thereby receive a Social Security Number.
- Department Of Commerce, Travel & Tourism Industries, and Bureau of Economic Analysis: Receives statistical information derived from NIIS data (non-PII) for critical and strategic purposes to estimate travel exports, which is mandated by Congress.
- Office of Immigration Statistics (OIS): NIIS statistical data (non-PII) is used for population estimates and routine statistical reporting to assess the effects of
immigration in the United States, which is mandated by the Immigration and Nationality Act and the Homeland Security Act.

PII provided on the I-94 number retrieval website is for the sole purpose of matching the information to the NIIS data to provide the nonimmigrant alien with his or her admission number. None of the information entered into the website for this retrieval is stored or shared.

6. Principle of Data Quality and Integrity

Principle: *DHS should, to the extent practical, ensure that PII is accurate, relevant, timely, and complete, within the context of each use of the PII.*

Eliminating the I-94 paper form enhances data quality and integrity because it significantly reduces the opportunity for human error. Carriers will no longer have to procure, store, and distribute the paper form to nonimmigrant aliens or collect the form when the nonimmigrant aliens depart. Nonimmigrant aliens arriving by commercial air or vessel will not have to complete the form when arriving in the United States, which in turn will reduce wait times at passenger processing and facilitate entry of all travelers. Where the new electronic process is being deployed, CBP will not have to collect the forms, stamp them, return the departure portion to the nonimmigrant and manually enter the I-94 information into its database.

7. Principle of Security

Principle: *DHS should protect PII (in all forms) through appropriate security safeguards against risks such as loss, unauthorized access or use, destruction, modification, or unintended or inappropriate disclosure.*

The public I-94 website, which will be available at https://www.cbp.gov/I94, will be a read-only website that uses authentication and encryption to protect against unauthorized access and tampering. If someone accessed the website using another nonimmigrant alien’s passport, which had not been reported stolen, the only information he or she would be able to access would be the I-94 admission number and the “Admit Until” date; information which cannot be used to obtain benefits unless accompanied by valid photo identification that matches the bearer.

In comparison, CBP’s use of the paper-based I-94 form presented certain security risks inherent in physically transporting and storing paper records containing PII, such as loss or destruction before the records can be entered into the system.

The new paperless process allows the I-94 arrival and departure data to go automatically into NIIS, and the data is protected by more controlled security safeguards. Because NIIS resides on the TECS platform, all system users with access to the I-94 data are TECS users who must undergo a background investigation prior to being allowed access. In addition to this threshold criterion for access, CBP also employs several layers of training, review, and access control. All users are required to read and comply with the TECS security requirements, as well
as take and pass the TECS Security and Privacy Awareness course annually in order to establish and retain TECS and NIIS access. Supervisory review is required to ensure that only authorized records are entered and the information is accurate. CBP Internal Affairs has functions that allow it to monitor the use of TECS. Extensive audit logs are maintained showing who has accessed records and what changes, if any, were made to the records. Lastly, access to TECS is controlled by both the physical location and mission responsibilities of the user.

8. Principle of Accountability and Auditing

Principle: DHS should be accountable for complying with these principles, providing training to all employees and contractors who use PII, and should audit the actual use of PII to demonstrate compliance with these principles and all applicable privacy protection requirements.

Transitioning to an automated process for Form I-94 allows CBP to enhance accountability by more accurately auditing the actual use of PII. With the arrival and departure data going directly into NIIS, there is immediate electronic accountability because TECS produces transaction logs reflecting an individual user’s activity within the system. Additionally, TECS logs and reports attempts at accessing functions and/or data that is inconsistent with what is authorized by the user’s TECS profile. These logs are regularly reviewed by the TECS Information System Security Officer to detect potentially unauthorized use of NIIS data. Additionally, Certification and Accreditation tests are repeatedly performed on TECS and reviews of security and authorized use practices are completed regularly.

A TECS user’s “role-based” access is formally audited and verified by the CBP Information Systems Security Branch on a sample basis during TECS Certification and Accreditation review. This audit tests the actual access capability authorized for the TECS User Profile and audits for the appropriate Use and required approvals. Additionally, the authorization for TECS access must be renewed annually by the TECS user by forwarding an approved TECS Access Request to the TECS Security Administrator. Access for the user is automatically disabled in the absence of this renewal.

Conclusion

Amending the I-94 regulations as described in the Interim Final Rule will allow CBP to transition from a paper Form I-94 to an automated process in certain circumstances. By defining the Form I-94 to allow for both paper and electronic formats, this rule enables CBP to proceed with the automation of the Form I-94 and eliminate most of the duplicative paper Form I-94 process. This provides immediate and substantial benefits to the traveling public, carriers, CBP, and other users. Air and vessel carriers will no longer have to procure, maintain, and distribute the paper form; nonimmigrant aliens will not have to fill it out; and CBP will not have to process
it. This will result in significant security enhancements and cost savings for CBP and carriers without negatively affecting travelers who are subject to the Form I-94 requirements.

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**Approval Signature Page**

Original signed and on file with the DHS Privacy Office.

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