Enhancing Security Through Biometric Identification

US-VISIT's Biometric Services Help Protect the United States From Dangerous People

International Collaboration Illustrates the Power of Biometrics to Verify Identity, Uncovers Rape Suspect Hiding From Authorities

The United Kingdom and the United States are currently working together to prevent criminals and immigration violators from entering their countries. When a man applied for asylum in the United Kingdom, U.K. immigration officials requested that the United States check the man's fingerprints against the Department of Homeland Security's US-VISIT data. The results revealed the man had previously traveled to the United States using a different name. This new information confirmed that the asylum applicant was lying about his identity. Upon further investigation, the United Kingdom learned that the man was wanted on rape charges in Australia, and he was returned there to face court proceedings.

Biometrics Reveal Immigration Violator Attempting to Use Twin Brother's Visa

A man arrived at New York's John F. Kennedy International Airport and presented a valid passport and a visa. The name on his travel documents did not raise any concern. However, when his fingerprints were checked through US-VISIT, they revealed he was trying to use the visa belonging to his twin brother, who had no history of criminal or immigration violations. By matching his biometrics, CBP officers learned this man had been apprehended for taking photos of a U.S. military base and had overstayed the term of his admission on a previous visit to the United States. CBP officers refused the man admission to the United States.

Biometrics Reveal Asylum Applicant Wanted For Kidnapping

When a man applied for asylum at a U.S. asylum office, his fingerprints were checked against US-VISIT's data. Although he had used three aliases and a different date of birth to try to evade detection, his biometrics revealed an extensive criminal record, including charges for rape, assault, and an outstanding warrant for kidnapping. As a result of US-VISIT's positive identification of this person, the asylum office contacted ICE, who later arrested the man.

BEFORE US-VISIT

Paper-based travel documents were susceptible to fraud/alteration

Officials relied on biographic information, which can be forged, to verify identity and make visa-issuance or admission decisions

Disparate information systems lacked coordination

Countries operated independently from one another on law and immigration enforcement

AFTER US-VISIT

→ Significantly increased ability to detect fraudulent/altered travel document use
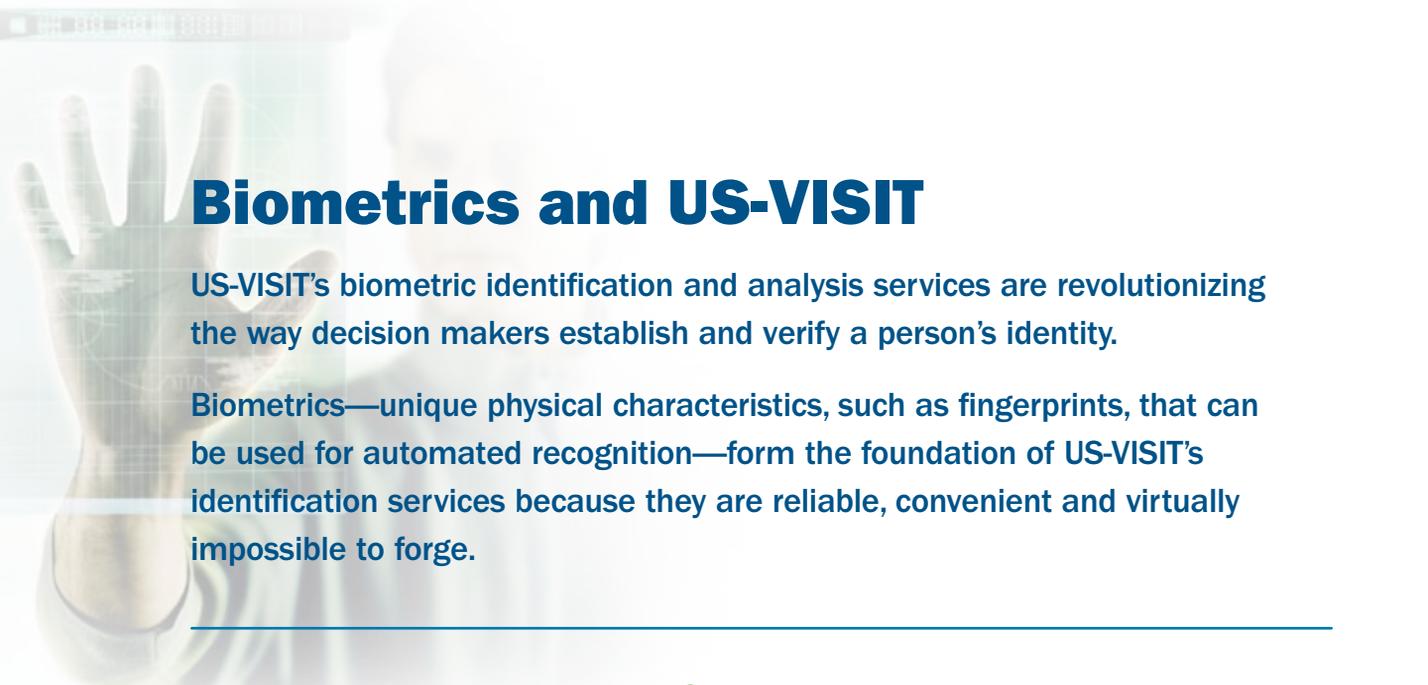
→ Officials use biometrics, which are virtually impossible to forge, to prevent dangerous people from obtaining visas or entering the United States

→ Better coordination with other agencies; provide a single source for biometrics-based information on dangerous people

→ Countries are adopting similar standards to stop criminals, immigration violators and known or suspected terrorists

Biometrics and US-VISIT

US-VISIT's biometric identification and analysis services are revolutionizing the way decision makers establish and verify a person's identity.

Biometrics—unique physical characteristics, such as fingerprints, that can be used for automated recognition—form the foundation of US-VISIT's identification services because they are reliable, convenient and virtually impossible to forge.

US-VISIT's Biometric Identification and Analysis Services

Biometrics collected by US-VISIT and linked to specific biographic information allow for the establishment, then verification, of a person's identity by the U.S. government.

With each encounter, from applying for a visa to seeking immigration benefits to entering the United States, US-VISIT checks a person's biometrics against a watch list of known or suspected terrorists, criminals and immigration violators.

Those biometrics are also checked against the entire database of all of the fingerprints the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has collected since US-VISIT began to determine if a person is using an alias and attempting to use fraudulent identification.

When an identification document is presented, a person's biometrics are also checked against those associated with the document to ensure that the document belongs to the person presenting it and not someone else.
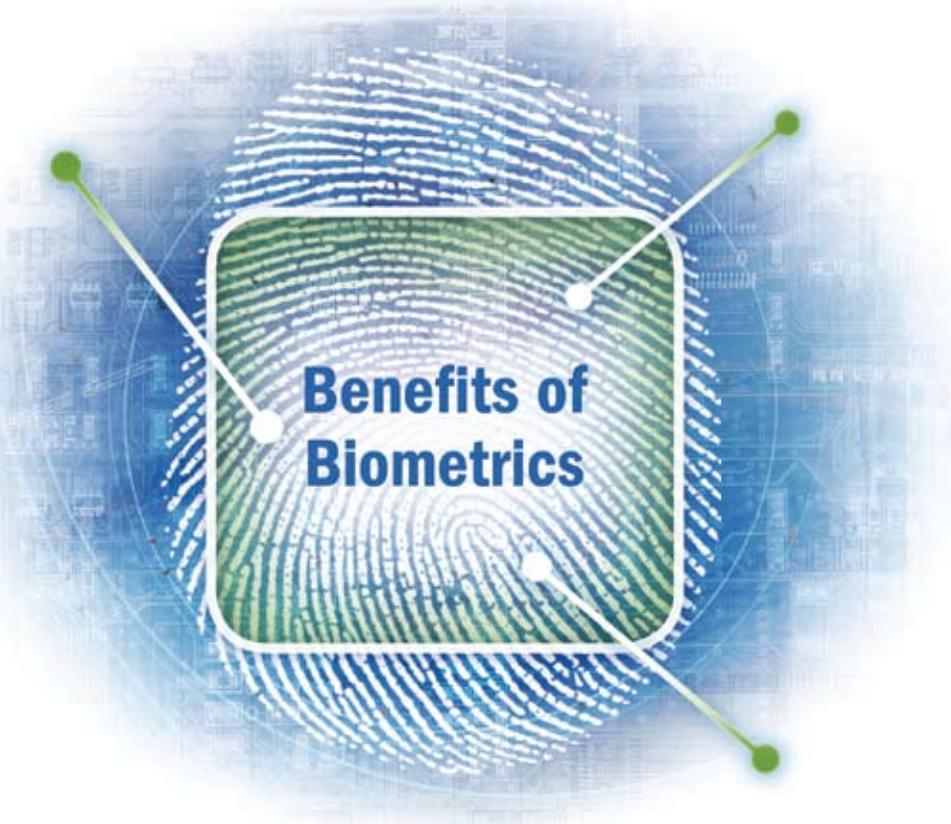
US-VISIT provides the results of these checks to decision makers when and where they need it. US-VISIT is helping prevent identity fraud and depriving criminals and immigration violators of the ability to cross our borders.

US-VISIT: At the Forefront of Government-Driven Biometric Innovation

For more than 40 years, the U.S. government has driven biometrics research, developing early applications, such as automated fingerprint matching and digital fingerprint scanners. It has significantly deepened collaboration across its many agencies and with the private sector to advance biometric technology as a means to counter the increasing sophistication of criminals, terrorists and other dangerous people.

After the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, Congress and the 9/11 Commission called for increased use of biometrics, and the White House created a cabinet-level subcommittee to coordinate policy to deploy biometric technology across many federal agencies. US-VISIT's biometric identification and analysis services are a successful application of years of government-driven innovation and increased focus since September 11.

Today, US-VISIT continues to drive biometric innovations that further homeland security and help us to stay one step ahead of those who seek to circumvent our security measures. This includes testing mobile biometric technology, exploring multimodal biometrics like iris and facial recognition and pushing industry to address the broad array of human factors that are critical to successful large-scale deployments of biometric technology.

US-VISIT's Biometric Services on the Front Lines

US-VISIT provides biometric identification and analysis services to decision makers across federal, state and local governments. US-VISIT supplies the technology for collecting and storing biometric data, provides analysis of the data to decision makers, and ensures the integrity of the data. The personal information collected by US-VISIT is used only for the purposes for which it was collected and as authorized or mandated by law.

Department of State (State)

US-VISIT establishes and verifies the identities of visa applicants at consulates and embassies around the world.

U.S. Customs & Border Protection (CBP)

US-VISIT establishes and verifies the identities of international visitors arriving at air, sea and land border ports of entry. US-VISIT also supports the U.S. Border Patrol's enforcement efforts by verifying the identities of illegal migrants apprehended at our land borders.

U.S. Citizenship & Immigration Services

US-VISIT establishes and verifies the identities of people applying for immigration benefits, including asylum or refugee status.

U.S. Immigration & Customs Enforcement (ICE)

US-VISIT provides ICE with actionable leads on people who have overstayed their visas and assists with the verification of the identities of arrested criminals.

U.S. Coast Guard

US-VISIT verifies the identities of illegal migrants the Coast Guard apprehends at sea in the Florida Straits; in the Mona Passage between Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic; and other locations.

Department of Justice & State and Local Law Enforcement

US-VISIT is working with the FBI to provide state and local law enforcement with immigration violation information on their criminal arrests so that officers have more complete information about the person they have arrested.

Investigation Support

US-VISIT's Biometric Support Center (BSC) helps many federal, state and local agencies with their investigations. Every week, the highly trained forensic analysts, who verify biometrics 24 hours a day, seven days a week, help solve crimes, identify John or Jane Does and support terrorist investigations.

Department of Defense (DOD) & Intelligence Community

US-VISIT helps DOD and the intelligence community identify terrorists and terror suspects by analyzing biometric information they collect from locations where terrorists have been, such as safe houses or training camps.

In Depth: Establishing and Verifying Identity Throughout the Travel Process

US-VISIT's most visible service is the collection of biometrics—digital fingerprints and a photograph—from international visitors at U.S. visa-issuing posts and ports of entry. Each day, US-VISIT verifies the identities of about 30,000 visitors for State and 100,000 for CBP.

Pre-travel

Consular officers collect biometric and biographic data from visa applicants to establish identity information. This information is used to help make visa determinations. As a result of biometric checks, US-VISIT has identified thousands of people with histories of criminal or immigration violations that would otherwise be unknown.

Entry

US-VISIT enables CBP officers to verify whether the person applying for entry to the United States is the same person to whom the visa was issued. For international visitors traveling under the Visa Waiver Program, it is the first opportunity to enroll in US-VISIT and establish identity. Visitors are also checked against watch lists and against US-VISIT's data to determine if they are using an alias and attempting to use fraudulent identification. Based on biometrics alone, US-VISIT has helped CBP stop thousands of people at ports of entry who were ineligible to enter the United States.

Status Management

US-VISIT monitors and records the status of people who apply for immigration benefits in the United States, such as adjustments to lawful permanent resident status, extensions of stay or changes from one nonimmigrant visa category to another. US-VISIT matches the entry and exit records of people to identify those who may have overstayed the terms of their admission and provides this information to ICE. This enhanced information-sharing process provides an increased capability to identify and apprehend people who have remained in the United States illegally—a critical tool with which to manage the immigration and border system.
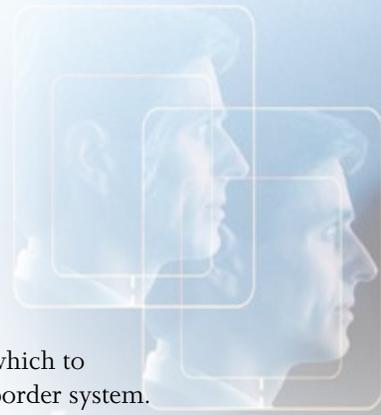
Exit

Applying the power of biometrics to an automated exit capability has always been a key objective of US-VISIT. Biometrically recording a visitor's departure will provide DHS with a faster, more accurate way to determine who has departed the United States according to the terms of their admission and who has not.

In the future, those international visitors who provide biometrics when they enter the United States will also be required to provide biometrics when they depart.

SUCCESS STORY: Mobile Biometric Identification Catches Human Smugglers, Deters Illegal Migration

The U.S. Coast Guard interdicted 10 migrants attempting to illegally enter Puerto Rico by sea. When the migrants' biometrics were checked against US-VISIT's data, it was revealed that two of the migrants had illegally entered before and were suspected of being part of a human trafficking organization. The two smugglers were brought ashore for prosecution along with two witnesses who will testify against the smugglers. Since the Coast Guard began using US-VISIT's mobile biometric services to identify illegal migrants at sea, prosecutions of repeat offenders have increased dramatically and illegal migration has dropped by 75 percent in the area where the technology is being used.

US-VISIT: Strengthening Security Through Biometric Identification

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security is charged with protecting the United States from dangerous people. To meet this mission, authorized frontline decision makers must be able to accurately identify the people they encounter and assess whether they pose a risk to the United States. DHS's US-VISIT program provides biometric identification and analysis services that enable the U.S. government to:

- Enhance the security of our citizens and visitors,
- Facilitate legitimate travel and trade,
- Ensure the integrity of our immigration system, and
- Protect the privacy of our visitors.

US-VISIT has strengthened the United States' immigration and border security capabilities to a level that simply did not exist before.

As we enhance the security of the United States with biometrics, other countries are seeking to collaborate with US-VISIT as they improve their immigration and border management systems. We are working with these countries to share best practices and develop standards that will improve security and facilitate travel worldwide.

Web Site:

For more information, visit the US-VISIT program Web site at *www.dhs.gov/us-visit*.