

US-VISIT UPDATE



Homeland
Security

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US-VISIT AND FBI BEGIN INFORMATION SHARING PILOT IN HOUSTON AREA
Provides Harris County Sheriff's Office with information about
immigration violators

WASHINGTON, D.C.-The U.S. Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) US-VISIT program and the Department of Justice (DOJ)/FBI's Criminal Justice Information Services (CJIS) Division began a pilot with the Harris County Sheriff's Office (Texas) on February 1, 2007, to test an automated information-sharing process.

For the first time, when Harris County Sheriff's officials submit an arrested person's fingerprints to access criminal history information, they will also have access to some immigration history information. The automated process also notifies federal immigration officials when fingerprints match those of an immigration violator. Immigration officials will evaluate relevant information about the person and take appropriate action. Law enforcement officials are not required to take action against immigration violators.

This pilot, as well as those started last year with the Boston Police Department and the Dallas County Sheriff's Office, is testing technology enhancements that US-VISIT and the FBI/CJIS have made to their respective fingerprint databases, the Automated Biometric Identification System (IDENT) and the Integrated Automated Fingerprint Identification System (IAFIS).

The enhancements allow for the automated sharing of subsets of criminal and immigration information in IDENT and IAFIS and are part of the U.S. government's efforts to ensure that decision makers have access to the information they need in a timely manner. Additionally, US-VISIT is moving toward a 10-fingerprint collection standard for IDENT, which will enable even greater accuracy when identifying travelers and further complement IAFIS' 10-fingerprint system.

Already the pilot is benefiting law and immigration enforcement officials. For example, the Harris County Sheriff's Office booked a person for assault causing bodily injury to a family member and submitted the fingerprints for a background check. Despite previous use of nine aliases and four different dates of birth, the person's fingerprints revealed a lengthy criminal and immigration history, including: deportation proceedings; entered without inspection; probation violation; driving while intoxicated; 18 U.S.C. 1546 fraud in connection with an immigration document; supervised release violator;

and assault. The new process automatically notified Harris County officers and federal immigration officials of this information. Following prosecution by Harris County law enforcement, the person will be turned over to federal immigration officials for removal from the United States.

For more information, please visit US-VISIT at www.dhs.gov/us-visit.