

US-VISIT UPDATE



**Homeland
Security**

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BIOMETRICS HELPING TO IDENTIFY AND APPREHEND IMMIGRATION VIOLATORS IN THE MONA PASSAGE

WASHINGTON, D.C.—The U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) announced today initial results of a biometric identification pilot program between US-VISIT and the U.S. Coast Guard to target illegal migration in the Mona Passage, a body of water between the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico. Since the start of the pilot program in November 2006, the Coast Guard has interdicted 21 vessels containing 558 undocumented aliens.

Twenty-two of the aliens apprehended face criminal prosecution for immigration offenses that prohibit attempts to enter or re-enter the U.S. illegally. Three of the aliens were previously removed as aggravated felons, and one alien was previously convicted of homicide in the United States.

“Biometrics is a powerful tool for the Coast Guard,” said Rear Admiral Wayne Justice, Coast Guard assistant commandant for response. “It acts as a force multiplier by helping our officers to quickly and accurately identify the migrants they encounter, and aggressively enforce our immigration laws at sea. We’re also sending a strong deterrent message to anyone thinking of entering U.S. territory through this body of water—they will be apprehended, and we will know who they are and the facts of their immigration history.”

The pilot program provides a technological capability for the Coast Guard to capture digital fingerprints and photographs from illegal aliens apprehended at sea and compare that biometric information against US-VISIT data. Aliens not being prosecuted are returned to the Dominican Republic, and their biometric information is retained and accessible to the Coast Guard to compare against future apprehensions.

The pilot project furthers a broader effort to develop a biometric mobile solution for collection and analysis, and represents another step in the department’s comprehensive strategy to secure the nation’s borders.