US-VISIT AIREXIT

THE ISSUE

Air Transport Association (ATA) opposes the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) mandate that airlines collect fingerprints at some point within the check-in process of all foreign nationals exiting the United States by air.

CONGRESS DIRECTED THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT TO IMPLEMENT THE PROGRAM

- Congress repeatedly has directed the government to develop and implement the program; not once has Congress indicated that this immigration-related function is a private-sector responsibility
- US-VISIT, both entry and exit, is a government function that must be performed by government officials as part of the overall immigration inspection process
- The DHS proposal is an unfunded mandate that will unjustifiably impose great costs on airlines
- We have been informed that the DHS proposal badly fails a cost-benefit analysis

DHS/TSA IS RESPONSIBLE FOR PASSENGER PROCESSING AT AIRPORTS

- DHS chose an Exit solution that was never tested during the two-year US-VISIT Airexit pilot
- Since 9/11, Transportation Security Administration (TSA), at Congress' direction, has taken control of security at all U.S. airports, staffing hundreds of security checkpoints through which *all* passengers must pass
- TSA also staffs document-checker positions before the security checkpoints to verify boarding documents and passenger identification
- TSA has said in the pending Secure Flight rulemaking proceeding that it wants airlines to be able to include bar-code information on boarding passes that TSA would read at the security check point
- TSA has announced that it intends to funnel passengers at checkpoints ("black diamond" program)
- TSA likely will assume responsibility for validating REAL IDs (biometric-encoded drivers licenses)
- Collection of fingerprints by TSA security checkpoint screeners or TSA document checkers at consolidated, centrally located checkpoints is sensible, efficient and consistent with Congress' intent

COLLECTION BY AIRLINES IS INEFFICIENT AND DELAYS PASSENGER PROCESSING

- Collection of fingerprints by the airlines, including non-U.S. carriers, at thousands of check-in counters, kiosks and gates will significantly delay passenger processing at a time when airlines are trying to simplify and thereby accelerate their check-in procedures
- Check-in processing is moving away from the airport to address security concerns of congested check-in areas and expedite passenger check-in through Internet check-in, PDAs and cell phones
- Airlines have invested millions of dollars in streamlining procedures, reprogramming and implementing processes to facilitate passenger processing; the DHS proposal will undermine that effort

THE SOLUTION

- Collection of fingerprints by TSA security checkpoint screeners or TSA document checkers at consolidated, centrally located checkpoints is sensible, efficient and consistent with Congress' intent

THE NEED FOR COLLABORATION

- ATA and its member airlines want to work cooperatively with DHS and US-VISIT to develop an AIREXIT solution that will enhance the U.S. immigration process – but with a solution that is managed and staffed by government personnel

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