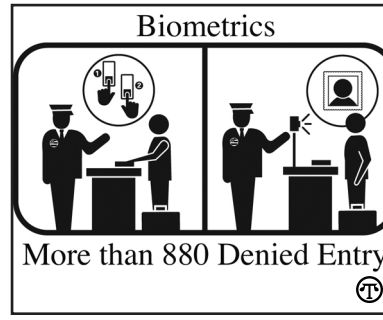
SECURITY FACTS & FIGURES

New Program Protects America's Hometowns

(NAPSA)—America's borders are safer thanks to new security measures known as biometric identifiers.

These methods of identification—specifically, digital finger scans and photographs—protect the nation from criminals and terrorists. They also protect visitors by making it virtually impossible for anyone to claim their travel documents should they be stolen or duplicated.

Since US-VISIT began, the use of biometrics-based technology has helped deny entry to more than 880 known criminals and visa violators.



The United States has denied entry to more than 880 criminals and immigration violators through the use of biometrics—digital finger scans and photographs.

On May 15, 2005, U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officers at Los Angeles International Airport encountered a Swiss national seeking admission. A fingerprint check revealed he was wanted by Interpol (International Criminal Police Organization) for suspected pedophilia.

The same month, Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents at the land border of Lewiston, N.Y. arrested David Kricheli, who was wanted for murder in Germany. Cross-referencing existing US-VISIT fingerprints with Interpol fingerprints revealed that Michael Tonia, a Canadian truck driver and frequent border crosser, and Kricheli were the same person.

On Sunday, Sept. 25, 2005, CBP officers at California's Otay Mesa Port of Entry processed an individual known as Hector Manuel Lopez. Within three minutes, it was verified that he was the subject of various warrants, among them a homicide. The identification was made solely by using biometrics. Lopez had at least 22 aliases on his rap sheet along with nine different dates of birth.

The matching of finger scans and biographic records has enabled State Department consular officers around the world to deny U.S. visas to more than 11,500 visa applicants.

A top priority for the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, this program is now in place at numerous air, sea and land ports with international arrivals and serves as the cornerstone of the U.S. government's emerging vision for a 21st century immigration and border management system. Entry procedures will be deployed to the remaining land border ports within the next few months. To date, the program has processed more than 40 million international visitors. US-VISIT demonstrates that America is a welcoming nation by keeping its doors open and secure. For more information, visit the US-VISIT Web site at www.dhs.gov/us-visit.

Content provided by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.