

TESTIMONY OF

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**U.S. CUSTOMS AND BORDER PROTECTION
DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY**

BEFORE THE

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TRANSPORTATION**

**COMPETITIVENESS, INNOVATION, AND EXPORT PROMOTION
SUBCOMMITTEE**

ON

**“TOURISM IN AMERICA: REMOVING BARRIERS AND
PROMOTING GROWTH”**

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Introduction

Chairman Klobuchar, Ranking Member Blunt, and distinguished Members of the Subcommittee: thank you for the opportunity to appear today to discuss the role of U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) in the implementation of the Travel Promotion Act and CBP's efforts to facilitate legitimate trade and travel while securing our nation's borders.

CBP is responsible for securing our nation's borders while facilitating the movement of legitimate travel and trade vital to our economy. Our purview spans more than 3,900 miles of border with Canada, 1,900 miles of border with Mexico, and 2,600 miles of shoreline. CBP is the largest uniformed federal law enforcement agency in the country, with over 20,700 Border Patrol Agents operating between the ports of entry and more than 20,600 CBP officers stationed at air, land, and sea ports nationwide. These forces are supplemented with approximately 1,200 Air and Marine agents and 2,300 agricultural specialists and other professionals. On average, CBP processes approximately 352 million travelers a year at ports of entry and processes 25.8 million in trade entities annually.

To counter the threat of terrorism and secure our borders, CBP relies on a balanced mix of professional law enforcement personnel, advanced technologies and modernized facilities and infrastructure both at and between the ports of entry. Using Advanced Passenger Information and our National Targeting Centers, CBP Officers utilize advanced targeting, screening and inspection technologies to quickly identify persons or

cargo that warrant additional scrutiny and address document deficiencies without unduly impeding the traveling public or commerce.

Model Ports Initiative

In January 2006, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the Department of State (DOS) introduced a joint vision to enhance border security while streamlining security processes and facilitating legitimate travel. As a result, the Model Ports Initiative was developed by CBP in partnership with industry stakeholders to improve the arrival experience for international travelers through improvements to staffing, signage, brochures, instructional videos, and technology. The initiative has been a great success and there are now 20 Model Airports in the continental United States.

In addition, Passenger Service Managers (PSM) have been designated at each Model Port to ensure that any customer concerns during the inspection process are immediately addressed. Posters displaying the name and contact information of the Port Director and PSM are displayed throughout the inspection processing area, allowing travelers to contact port management regarding their experience during the inspection process. PSMs have been given training on de-escalating stressful situations and are tasked with providing professionalism and cultural sensitivity updates and training to CBP officers.

The Model Ports have established joint working groups with airport authorities and carriers to improve wait times. New line posts and other modifications have been made to improve queuing efficiency and ultimately reduce overall processing time. CBP is

currently piloting two initiatives to more efficiently process travelers and reduce wait times, including a pilot to provide designated processing areas for passengers arriving with no checked baggage and a new process for passengers arriving with tight connections to coordinate with air carriers in order to decrease the number of missed connections from international flights. I will discuss these pilots in more detail later in my testimony.

CBP is constantly working to further improve the Model Ports. In coordination with the DHS Private Sector Office and travel industry representatives, we have developed a customer service survey to allow us to evaluate and improve the Model Ports Initiative. The survey will be conducted in the spring of 2011 and results should be available within a few months. Customer feedback is also collected through the Comment Card program. Comment Cards are available and distributed at all ports of entry and results are distributed monthly to the ports of entry so that managers can appropriately adjust procedures in order to ensure efficient processing. The Comment Card program and the upcoming survey will serve to benchmark passenger satisfaction and CBP professionalism at the 20 Model Ports of Entry.

Global Entry

We are continuing to enhance and expand our trusted traveler programs, which expedite the processing of known, low-risk travelers so that we can better focus our attention on higher-risk, unknown travelers. Global Entry, CBP's newest trusted traveler program, which launched in 2008, is aimed at facilitating low-risk travelers in the air environment.

To use Global Entry, applicants must pass a thorough security assessment to include biographic- and fingerprint-based database checks and an interview with a CBP officer. Applications for membership in the program can be submitted online using CBP's Global Online Enrollment System. Using automated kiosks at the 20 designated airports of the Model Ports Initiative, Global Entry Members may bypass the regular passport control queues, and complete their CBP declarations via touch screen.

To date, more than 121,000 travelers have enrolled in the Global Entry program. Global Entry has reduced average wait times for Global Entry users by more than 70 percent for the participants, with more than 75 percent of travelers using Global Entry processed in less than five minutes. The 131 Global Entry kiosks have been used nearly 800,000 times, equal to approximately 16,600 CBP inspectional processing hours. These hours are then expended on the normal passenger processing, helping to reduce overall wait times.

Global Entry membership is currently limited to U.S. citizens, U.S. lawful permanent residents (LPRs), Canadian citizens, and Mexican citizens. Additionally, in a joint arrangement with the Netherlands, CBP allows Dutch citizens to participate in Global Entry, and U.S. citizens to participate in the Dutch trusted traveler program, FLUX. CBP is also engaging in discussions with several other countries—including the United Kingdom, Germany, Korea and Japan—for similar arrangements to exchange trusted traveler membership benefits.

Global Entry provides similar benefits as the NEXUS and SENTRI trusted traveler programs. NEXUS is a bilateral program with the Canadian Border Services Agency (CBSA), which offers pre-approved, low-risk travelers expedited travel between the U.S. and Canada through designated lanes and kiosks at the land border and in airports. SENTRI offers pre-approved, low-risk travelers expedited entry into the U.S. through designated lanes at the U.S.-Mexico land border ports. Like Global Entry, membership in these programs is valid for five years, and the application process, membership requirements, and standard of vetting are the same. Beginning in December 2010, all NEXUS members and all U.S. citizens and LPRs in SENTRI were extended Global Entry benefits at no additional fee. In addition, Global Entry eligibility was extended to qualifying Mexican citizens. CBP is currently working to integrate all of its trusted traveler programs into a single application process that will allow members to choose benefits in the various travel environments based on their particular needs.

Ready Lanes

A Ready Lane is a vehicle primary lane that only accepts travelers using RFID-enabled travel documents. In June 2010, CBP launched a Ready Lane pilot at the Ambassador Bridge in Detroit. In October 2010, the first Ready Lane along the southern border opened in Del Rio, Texas, and in December 2010 a Ready Lane opened in El Paso, Texas. The results to date suggest that this program successfully expedites the flow of legitimate travel. Vehicle throughput has increased as much as 25 percent in these lanes and wait times for travelers with RFID-enabled documents have been reduced by an average of 12 seconds per vehicle. CBP plans to deploy Ready Lanes to additional high volume land crossings in the near future.

Private Sector Partnerships and Innovations

As I mentioned earlier, CBP, in coordination with our private sector partners, is currently piloting two initiatives to more efficiently process travelers and reduce wait times.

Starting in May 2010, CBP designated primary inspection lanes for international travelers arriving at Houston's George Bush/Houston Intercontinental Airport without checked baggage. Under this program – called "OneStop" – approximately 800 passengers per day are allowed to bypass the baggage carousel and exit the federal inspection service area more quickly. Initial results suggest that users of OneStop will save approximately 17 minutes per trip as a result of participation in the program. Further, the initial results suggest that passengers with luggage will also benefit from shorter wait times due to the fewer number of passengers in the main lines.

Another program, called "Express Connection," designates primary inspection lanes for travelers with closely scheduled connecting flights. Airline personnel or the terminal operator identify eligible travelers and direct them to designated primary lanes for CBP processing. "Express Connection" is currently operational at five of CBP's Model Ports of Entry and we are currently using the best practices learned at these locations to develop a set of guidelines for implementation at other ports of entry around the U.S.

Initial results suggest that the "Express Connection" program could save air carriers \$2.2 million to \$3.5 million per year by reducing the number of missed connections. This cost savings manifest as avoided overnight stay passenger reimbursements or rebooking costs.

ESTA

The Electronic System for Travel Authorization (ESTA) was one of the security enhancements mandated by the Implementing Recommendations of the 9/11 Commission Act of 2007. ESTA is an automated system used to determine the eligibility of visitors to travel to the United States under the Visa Waiver Program (VWP) and whether such travel poses a law enforcement or security risk. ESTA provides DHS with the ability to conduct advance screening of VWP travelers, enabling DHS to preclude some travelers who are ineligible for the VWP from initiating travel to the United States. Prior to ESTA, VWP travelers did not undergo any screening prior to their arrival in the United States – their application for entry to the United States occurred upon arrival.

To facilitate the ESTA application process for VWP travelers, the ESTA website is available in 21 languages in addition to English and contains links or pop-up windows with additional information. The implementation of ESTA has been very successful, with a compliance rate of more than 99 percent and with more than 99 percent of applications receiving an immediate decision.

The Travel Promotion Act of 2009 required that DHS establish a fee for the use of ESTA, consisting of \$10 per travel authorization to fund travel promotion activities, plus an amount that will ensure recovery of the costs of providing and administering ESTA. CBP conducted an ESTA fee analysis and determined that a \$4 fee is necessary to ensure recovery of the full costs of providing and administering ESTA. Therefore, effective September 8, 2010, CBP began collecting a \$14 fee for each ESTA application.

The successful implementation of ESTA has helped us to facilitate the flow of legitimate travel. We now use the electronic information gathered through ESTA to eliminate the Form I-94W – a paper form that provides a record of VWP arrivals and departures – for foreign visitors arriving by air and sea. Automation of the I-94W was completed in the summer of 2010 and resulted in a 58 percent reduction in the inspection time for VWP applicants for admission—streamlining passenger processing and improving the overall traveler experience at our ports of entry.

CBP is currently looking into the possibility of automating the regular Form I-94 – the paper record of arrivals and departures by non-VWP travelers – by using data from the Advanced Passenger Information System (APIS) program. APIS collects biographic information on a person’s travel document – enabling air carriers to submit pre-arrival and departure manifest data on all passengers and crew members.

IAP

The Immigration Advisory Program (IAP) is part of CBP’s layered border strategy designed to prevent terrorists and other high-risk travelers from boarding commercial aircraft bound for the United States. IAP officers are posted in a number of foreign airports and use the full array of CBP’s pre-departure screening capabilities, as well as skills in passenger analysis, interviewing, and document examination, to identify high-risk passengers prior to departure.

IAP officers make a “no board” recommendation to carriers and host governments regarding passengers bound for the U.S. IAP and ESTA reduce the number of passengers who are declared inadmissible upon arrival in the United States. In addition to the clear

security benefit of this advanced screening, these programs help air carriers avoid penalties for transporting inadmissible passengers and having to provide for the cost of transporting the passenger to their origin point.

In addition to IAP, CBP Regional Carrier Liaison Groups (RCLG) located in Honolulu, New York (JFK), and Miami are now involved in pre-departure targeting for all high-risk travelers. RCLGs assist CBP in denying boarding to mala fide passengers on all flights destined to the United States from foreign locations that do not have an IAP presence. This expands the nation's zone of security beyond our physical borders by preventing passengers who may be inadmissible, or who possess fraudulent documents, from traveling to the United States. The RCLGs also work with carriers to facilitate the boarding of U.S. citizens and other bona fide travelers who may encounter issues with their travel documents, and provide 24/7 assistance on other immigration related issues.

Conclusion

Chairman Klobuchar, Ranking Member Blunt, and distinguished Members of the Subcommittee, thank you again for this opportunity to testify on behalf of U.S. Customs and Border Protection. DHS is committed to securing our nation's borders while facilitating the movement of legitimate travel and trade so vital to our economy. I would be pleased to answer your questions.



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Born and raised on Long Island, New York. Graduated from the State University of New York at Albany, with a Bachelor's of Arts degree in Psychology. Joined U.S. Customs Service in 1991, as a Customs Inspector and worked in the New York/New Jersey seaport, as well as on the U.S./Mexico land border at Laredo, Texas. Has been assigned to the Office of Field Operations at Headquarters since 1999 and has worked on many different policy and operational issues. Currently, he is the Executive Director of Admissibility and Passenger Programs for U.S. Customs and Border Protection/Department of Homeland Security, and has responsibility for all traveler related policies including Trusted Traveler Programs, the Electronic System for Travel Authorization, the National Targeting Center, the Immigration Advisory Program, the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative, Advanced Passenger Information Systems, and several other areas. He also recently completed the Senior Executive Fellows course at the JFK School of Government at Harvard University.