

## INTERPOL KEY TO 9/11 COMMISSION RECOMMENDATIONS ON TERRORIST TRAVEL

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### Statement for the Record

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### "Interrupting Terrorist Travel Strengthening the Security of International Travel Documents"

U.S. support and engagement with INTERPOL is key to fully implementing 9/11 Commission recommendations on terrorist travel. The Commission emphasized international cooperation to contain terrorist travel in part in recognition of INTERPOL's border security programs. These same programs mesh with the U.S. policy to 'push our borders out'. Examples of INTERPOL's contribution to containing terrorist travel include its global police communication system; 'most wanted' color-coded notices; and lost and stolen passport /ID database (STLD).

The 9/11 Commission defined *terrorist travel* as the exploitation of border security vulnerabilities by terrorists seeking to travel anywhere in the world. This includes, for example, travel documentation manipulation, the recycling of passports, and use of travel facilitators and alien smugglers who are paid for acquiring and creating travel documentation for terrorist travel. Today's hearing is important because it not only shows Chairman Feinstein and Ranking Member Kyl's deep commitment to border security, but also this committee's recognition that secure travel documents are essential to verifying identity. Verifying identity—assuring people are who they say they are—is, in turn, essential to securing borders. Accordingly, the Commission stated:

*Exchanging terrorist information with other countries, consistent with privacy requirements, along with listings of lost and stolen passports, will have immediate security benefits. We should move towards real-time verification of passports with issuing authorities. The further away from our borders that screening occurs, the more security benefits we gain. (p. 389)*

**Recommendation:** *We should do more to...raise U.S. and global security standards for travel and border crossing over the medium and long term through extensive international cooperation. (p. 390)*

The Commission specifically mentioned 'lost and stolen passports' because of INTERPOL's creation of its STLD and its potential to provide valuable, cost effective and timely information to further secure our borders. The Commission's language stressing 'extensive international cooperation' was used in acknowledgment of

INTERPOL's ever evolving contribution to counterterrorism and border security and INTERPOL's unique position as the only international body representing every national police force in the world.

Yet, despite 9/11 Commission recommendations and multiple opportunities for the US government to fully partner with INTERPOL in the last three years since the Commission issued its final report, our border officers still do not have INTERPOL's real time lost/stolen passport data as an automatic check at primary inspections at ports of entry. While the Swiss government has been stopping over 100 attempted lost/stolen passport entries per month using INTERPOL's database since December 2005, the U.S. government –if the Swiss statistics are conservatively extrapolated to US potential statistics— could have been denying about 10,000 such entries per month. Since December 2005, that could have been 170,000 attempted fraudulent entries potentially denied.\*

Not only has INTERPOL built and continued to upgrade and expand this database—today 123 countries contribute stolen/lost travel document data with 6.7 million documents listed—the data can be delivered in two forms to deal with country-specific issues about network access and exchange of information. In addition, INTERPOL's database protects privacy by disassociating names from passport numbers, assuring that passport holders who rightfully report their passports as lost/stolen are not then criminalized in the event that their passport surfaces with an assumed or counterfeited name at a border inspection portal.

The value of INTERPOL's STLD does not end at the ports of entry, however. Verifying identities and authenticating documents is a theme that runs throughout the 9/11 Commission border recommendations and thus pertains to all elements of the U.S. border apparatus and ID document issuing authorities at the federal and state level.

**State Department—*Visa applicants at consulates abroad.*** Those seeking visas must present passports. They should be checked immediately with the STLD.

**DHS Customs and Border Protection—*Ports of entry.*** All POEs (air, land and sea) should have access to the STLD at primary inspection.

**DHS Customs and Border Protection—*Land borders between ports of entry.*** Alien smugglers are at times caught with caches of travel documents; access to the STLD could help determine whether the docs are legitimate and reported in the STLD or fakes.

**DHS Immigration and Customs Enforcement—*Immigration enforcement.*** All varieties of immigration enforcement—including worksite, the JTTF activity and ID Fraud Task Forces—will continue to benefit from access to the STLD.

**DHS U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services—*Immigration benefits.*** My Center for Immigration Studies' September 2006 report *Immigration and Terrorism: Moving Beyond the 9/11 Staff Report on Terrorist Travel* showed rampant abuse of immigration benefits by terrorists, including passport fraud. Since all persons applying for immigration benefits must present a passport and fraud in immigration benefits is notoriously high, an initial check of applicants' passport data through the STLD would be a boost to streamlining adjudication.

**State/Federal implementation of REAL ID Act—*Minimum Standards for Secure Driver Licenses and State-Issued IDs.*** The REAL ID Act sets out minimum standards for the issuance of state-issued driver licenses and personal IDs. For the states that seek to comply, identity verification of foreign residents will include a check of legal status. However, there is no way at this time to verify foreign passport information. Nor is there a way for state authorities to check if a US passport presented has been reported as lost/stolen. The STLD may fill that void.

**This Congress committed to implementing all 9/11 Commission recommendations in full. INTERPOL's work supports those recommendations. INTERPOL's programs should have had a solid place in U.S. border strategies and protocols three years ago, and thus should be a priority for appropriate authorizations and appropriations in this Congress. This committee should also commit to providing adequate oversight to assure the STLD provides optimum use to border personnel in the field.**

\* The INTERPOL pilot in Switzerland has about 350,000 searches per month with over 100 solid hits. Assuming the conservative 2004 Customs and Border Protection numbers of about 35,000,000 persons processed per month, the SLTD would yield at least 10,000 solid hits per month.

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